DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 191 967	UD 020 909

AUTHOR	Benson, Jonathon L.; And Others
TITLE	Citizen Participation for Urban Management. Modules 1-3.
INSTITUTION	Ohio State Univ., Columbus. Mershon Center.
SPONS AGENCY	Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C. Office of Policy Development and Research.; National Training and Development Service for State and Local Government, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	Aug 77
NOTE	230p.; For a related document see UD 020 910.
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC10 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Citizen Participation; *Government (Administrative Body); Instructional Materials; Postsecondary Education; *Public Administration Education; Public Agencies; *Urban Areas; Workshops

ABSTRACT

These workshop curricular materials concerning the design and implementation of alternate forms of citizen participation mechanisms were prepared for use with management-level and pre-service personnel involved in urban management within a political environment. Three curricular modules are presented. Module I, "An Overview of Citizen Participation," introduces issues pertaining to the involvement of citizens in governmental planning and decision making. Module II, "Communicating with Citizens," covers problems and issues affecting meaningful communication between citizens and governmental agencies. Module III, "Citizen Participation Mechanisms," examines the advantages and disadvantages of different citizen participation strategies. (MK)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

AUG 1 5 1980

ED191967

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION
FOR
URBAN MANAGEMENT

MODULES 1 - 3

Developed by

THE MERSHON CENTER

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

DR. JONATHON L. BENSON
DR. PHILIP M. BURGESS
DR. RICHARD A. CONWAY
DR. THOMAS E. JAMES, JR.
DR. LAWRENCE L. SLONAKER

Under Contract to

THE URBAN MANAGEMENT CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

THE NATIONAL TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICE

5028 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20016

Funded by

The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy Development
and Research, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

UD020909

Package VII

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This curriculum could not have been developed without the help and assistance of a number of people. The project was made immeasurably easier because of the assistance provided by those individuals who served on our Assessment Team and Review Committee. The Assessment Team consisted of Jack Culbertson, Executive Director, University Council for Education Administration; and Joe Wine, former City Commissioner and presently the Executive Assistant to the City Commission in Dayton, Ohio. The Review Committee consisted of Jerry Bixler, Director of Planning in Canton, Ohio; Betty Chapman, a citizen who has been involved in numerous citizen participation projects in Columbus, Ohio; Judy Hoover, Director of Programs and Grants for Wooster, Ohio; and Wayman Palmer, Director, Department of Development of Toledo, Ohio. These people provided the curriculum developers with the views of public management practitioners and citizens, and all spent a great deal of time reviewing the curricular materials.

In addition, a number of other people have also provided insights and advice throughout the development of the curriculum. In particular, we would like to thank Richard C. Snyder, Director of the Mershon Center of The Ohio State University, and Harold D. Lasswell, Policy Sciences Center, New York. Further, we wish to thank Steven C. Ballard of the Science and Public Policy Program at the University of Oklahoma. His contribution to the conceptual design of the curriculum was invaluable.

Personnel of the City of Toledo's Department of Development participated in the testing of the curriculum. Their feedback was valuable for ensuring the development of a curriculum sensitive to the needs of public officials.

We would also like to thank the entire project management staff at NTDS, particularly Blue Wooldridge and Tom Urban, for their continuing assistance and encouragement.

Finally, we owe special thanks to Mike O'Loughlin, a doctoral candidate in Political Science at The Ohio State University, and to Gloria Vernier, our Administrative Assistant. Mike provided insightful and extensive suggestions that contributed to the successful completion of the curriculum. Gloria deserves special praise. She not only typed and retyped numerous drafts under typically chaotic conditions, but also fulfilled her administrative duties with competence and efficiency. Perhaps most importantly, she remained our friend, regardless of the demands we made.

Whatever participants find useful in this curriculum is largely due to the contributions of these people.

Jonathon L. Benson
Philip M. Burgess
Richard A. Conway
Thomas E. James, Jr.
Larry L. Slonaker

Columbus, Ohio
August, 1977

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OVERVIEW TO CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Page

A. Introduction VII.I.1
  1. Citizen Participation in Clarkville VII.I.1
    a. The Occasion VII.I.1
    b. The Participants VII.I.1
    c. Perspectives of the Participants VII.I.2
    d. The Process VII.I.3
    e. Discussion VII.I.6
    f. Conclusion VII.I.9
  2. Overview of the Curriculum VII.I.9
    a. Introduction VII.I.9
    b. Orientation of the Curriculum VII.I.10
    c. The Content of the Curriculum VII.I.11

B. What is Citizen Participation? VII.I.13

C. Why Should We Have Citizen Participation VII.I.17
  1. Introduction VII.I.17
  2. The Reasons for Encouraging Citizen Participation . . . VII.I.18
    a. Strengthening Our Democratic System VII.I.18
    b. Citizen Participation Can Serve the Government VII.I.20
    c. Citizen Participation Can Serve the Citizen VII.I.24
    d. Summary VII.I.25
  3. The Functions of Citizen Participation VII.I.26
    a. Introduction VII.I.26
    b. The Information Function VII.I.27
    c. The Accessibility Function VII.I.28
    d. The Involvement Function VII.I.29
    e. The Accountability Function VII.I.30
    f. Long-Term Convenings and the Functions of Citizen Participation VII.I.30
  4. The Constraints of Citizen Participation VII.I.31
    a. Introduction VII.I.31
    b. Increased Costs VII.I.31
    c. Complicate the Decisionmaking Process VII.I.33
    d. Promotes a Parochial Perspective VII.I.33
    e. The Dilemma of Representation VII.I.33

D. The Development of Citizen Participation Through Federal Legislation VII.I.36
  1. Introduction VII.I.36
  2. Urban Renewal VII.I.37
  3. The Community Action Program VII.I.38
  4. The Model Cities Program VII.I.39
  5. The National Environmental Impact Statements VII.I.41

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

Page

6. General Revenue Sharing VII.I.41
7. The Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 . . . . VII.I.43
8. The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Citizen Participation Task Force VII.I.44

E. Facilitating Effective Citizen Participation VII.I.46
1. Purpose VII.I.46
2. Roles, Responsibilities, and Relationships VII.I.46
3. Style of Operation VII.I.46
4. Membership VII.I.46
5. Communication VII.I.47
6. Training VII.I.47
7. Technical Assistance VII.I.47
8. Tangible Improvements VII.I.48
9. Self-Evaluation VII.I.48
10. Form and Function VII.I.48

Footnotes VII.I.51

FIGURES

1. CINC Area Goals and Objectives VII.I.4

2. The Present and Future Importance of Twelve Public Management Functions Reported by Urban Administrators . . . VII.I.23

3. Major Barriers to Citizen Participation as Viewed by Municipal Officials VII.I.32

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

COMMUNICATING WITH CITIZENS

Page

A. Communications: Its Role in Citizen Participation VII.II.2

B. Communication Techniques VII.II.4
  1. Introduction VII.II.4
  2. One-Way Communications Techniques VII.II.5
  3. Two-Way Communications Techniques VII.II.9
  4. Eliciting Citizen Feedback VII.II.13

C. Local Government Credibility VII.II.16
  1. Introduction VII.II.16
  2. The Concept of Credibility VII.II.16

D. Role Perspectives VII.II.20

E. Summary VII.II.23

Footnotes VII.II.26

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

Page

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION MECHANISMS: OVERVIEW VII.III.1

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION MECHANISMS: LONG-TERM CONVENINGS

A. Introduction VII.III.12

B. Functions VII.III.13

C. Implementation and Major Design Issues VII.III.16
  1. Introduction VII.III.16
  2. Need and Purpose of the Convening VII.III.16
  3. Recruitment and Roles of Participants VII.III.17
  4. Staff Support VII.III.18
  5. Setting VII.III.18
  6. Conducting the Meeting VII.III.19
  7. Group Techniques VII.III.21
    a. Map and Chart Room VII.III.21
    b. Nominal Group Techniques VII.III.21
    c. Delphi Techniques VII.III.22
    d. Framework for Analysis VII.III.23

D. Case Study VII.III.25

E. Summary VII.III.28

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION MECHANISMS: SHORT-TERM CONVENINGS

A. Introduction VII.III.32

B. Functions VII.III.33

C. Implementation and Major Design Issues VII.III.35
  1. Introduction VII.III.35
  2. Pre-Meeting Preparations VII.III.35
  3. Conducting the Meeting VII.III.36
  4. Follow-up Procedures VII.III.37

D. Case Study VII.III.38

E. Summary VII.III.40

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION MECHANISMS: TERRITORIAL GROUPS

Page

A. Introduction VII.III.44

B. Functions VII.III.46

C. Implementation and Major Design Issues VII.III.49
  1. Clarity of Purpose VII.III.49
  2. Membership VII.III.49
  3. Territorial Boundaries VII.III.51
  4. Staffing and Support VII.III.51
  5. Maintaining Community Interest and Organizational Strength and Productivity VII.III.52
  6. Legal Constraints VII.III.53

D. Case Study VII.III.54

E. Summary VII.III.57

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION MECHANISMS: FUNCTIONAL CONTINUING MECHANISMS

A. Introduction VII.III.62

B. Functions VII.III.63

C. Implementation and Major Design Issues VII.III.65
  1. Introduction VII.III.65
  2. Purpose VII.III.65
  3. Membership VII.III.66
  4. Staffing and Organization VII.III.67

D. Case Studies VII.III.69

E. Summary VII.III.73

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION MECHANISMS: DECENTRALIZATION

A. Introduction VII.III.76

B. Administrative Decentralization: Neighborhood Facilities VII.III.77
  1. Overview of Mechanisms VII.III.77
  2. Functions VII.III.78
  3. Implementation and Major Design Issues VII.III.81
    a. Introduction VII.III.81
    b. Clarity of Purpose VII.III.82
    c. Quality of Staff VII.III.83
    d. Expectations VII.III.84
    e. Strategy for Development VII.III.84
  4. Case Study VII.III.85

C. Political Decentralization VII.III.87
  1. Overview VII.III.87
  2. Pro-Decentralization Arguments VII.III.87
  3. Con-Decentralization Arguments VII.III.88

D. Summary VII.III.89

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION MECHANISMS: GRIEVANCE PROCESSING

A. Introduction VII.III.94
  1. Ombudsmen VII.III.95
  2. Complaint Bureaus VII.III.96

B. Functions VII.III.97

C. Implementation and Major Design Issues VII.III.101
  1. Independence/Autonomy VII.III.101
  2. Degree of Centralization VII.III.102
  3. Jurisdiction/Scope of Authority VII.III.102
  4. Staffing and Organization VII.III.104
  5. Style of Operation VII.III.106

D. Case Study VII.III.109

E. Summary VII.III.112

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION MECHANISMS: SURVEYS

Page

A. Introduction VII.III.116

B. Functions VII.III.117
  1. Overview VII.III.117
  2. Types of Information VII.III.118
    a. Measure the Level of Citizen Knowledge and Awareness VII.III.118
    b. Determine Degree of Consensus and Predict How Citizens Might React to New Initiatives . . . VII.III.119
    c. Problem Identification and Needs Assessment . . . VII.III.119
    d. Evaluation VII.III.124
    e. Prioritization VII.III.124
    f. Limitation on Usefulness of Surveys VII.III.124

C. Implementation and Major Design Issues VII.III.126
  1. Purpose of Surveys VII.III.128
  2. What Type of Survey--Mail, Telephone, Personal VII.III.128
  3. Designing the Questionnaire. VII.III.131
  4. Sampling VII.III.131
  5. Field Work and Data Reduction VII.III.132
  6. Reporting the Results VII.III.132
  7. Cost VII.III.134

D. Case Study VII.III.135
  1. Overview VII.III.135
  2. Basic Parameters of the Survey VII.III.135
  3. User Orientation VII.III.137
  4. Questionnaire Design VII.III.137
  5. Field Operation VII.III.138
  6. Dissemination and Utilization VII.III.138

E. Summary VII.III.139

Footnotes VII.III.142

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

FIGURES

Page

1. A Comparison of Citizen Participation Mechanisms VII.III.6
2. A Comparison of Citizen Participation Mechanisms: Advantages and Constraints VII.III.8
3. Results of Questions Dealing With Carryout Service VII.III.120
4. Child Care Needs Assessment VII.III.122
5. Hypothetical Results for Child Care Needs Assessment VII.III.123
6. Sample Questions Concerning Budget Priorities VII.III.125
7. Comparative Assessment of Alternative Survey Methods VII.III.130
8. Relationship Between Sample Size and Percent Error VII.III.133

OVERVIEW MODULE

The overall goal of this module is to provide a basic introduction and background to some of the key issues associated with citizen participation. After completing this module, the reader should be more aware of and be able to specify:

- various definitions of citizen participation;
- the reasons for promoting citizen participation and the benefits that can accrue to government and citizens;
- the functions citizen participation can serve;
- the constraints and liabilities associated with involving citizens in governmental planning and decisionmaking;
- the development of citizen participation in Federal legislation; and
- the design factors to be considered in order to facilitate effective citizen participation.

A. Introduction

1. Citizen Participation in Clarkville

a. The Occasion

Each year Clarkville develops a schedule of capital improvements--the Capital Improvements Program (CIP)--to be accomplished over the next 6 years. The plan contains a list of projects planned by the various city departments and divisions as well as the sources of funding for each project. The approved program for the first year--the Capital Improvements Budget (CIB)--is adopted by the City Council and becomes part of the city's official budget.

In the past the CIP was formulated in light of division and department priorities, financial constraints, and consideration of the needs of the city. This year, at the urging of the Clarkville City Council, the city's Department of Development, Division of Planning (which coordinates the CIP planning process) invited the "Citizens of Center City" to express their desires and have an input into determining what capital improvements would be constructed in their community.

The invitation to participate in the CIP planning process was extended through a letter dated July 6, 1975. This letter was sent to neighborhood leaders and noted that the process of preparing the 1976-1981 Capital Improvements Program had begun and requested written input by July 27, 1976. A suggestion was also made to review the 1975-1980 CIP--a copy of which could be examined at City Hall. In addition, neighborhood leaders received a follow-up letter outlining criteria to be used in preparing requests regarding the 1976-1981 CIP and the 1976 CIB. The guidelines were dated July 19, 1976, and were received by most people on July 23, 1976.

In response, a group of inner city neighborhood leaders decided to submit a joint set of recommendations.

b. The Participants

A number of major participants were involved in the CIP process:

- the Department of Development's Division of Planning (DOD-P);
- the City Council (Council);
- the Mayor (Mayor);
- a neighborhood leader (A);
- a neighborhood leader (B); and
- the Clarkville Inner-Circle Neighborhood Coalition (CINC).

CINC includes neighborhood groups and civic associations in an area surrounding, but not including, the downtown area of Clarkville. The area covered by this coalition of neighborhood groups and associations includes 43 percent of the city's population, with 39 percent of the families and 38 percent of the children.

While not all neighborhood leaders and civic associations in the area responded to the call of leader A, CINC did include the largest and most active groups. In summary, the participants in the process came from the civic and public arena, as well as including the participation of a loose coalition of neighborhood groups and associations.

c. Perspectives of the Participants

Each of the participants involved in the CIP planning process and their own values, expectations, and identities. The following is a characterization of the perspectives of the major participants.

- DOD-P tends to view the CIP in terms of its implications for private sector investments and in relation to anticipated urban growth and resulting demand for public services and facilities. The development of the CIP is largely viewed as an internal planning process which, once completed, is subjected to public hearings prior to its submission to Council. DOD-P tends to take the role of the expert planner and land use specialist.

- Council represents a variety of views. Those calling for more citizen participation in the planning process were responsibile for the formal invitation to citizens outlined in the letter of July 6. Council has been concerned that they are unable to evaluate the fit between recommendations from the administration and the needs and priorities that exist on a community-wide basis.

- The Mayor has evidenced two general concerns relating to this area. First, he has made major efforts to create and maintain direct contacts with citizens and citizen groups via televised neighborhood meetings, visitations, etc. Second, he has continuously expressed concern that feedback mechanisms are insufficiently developed to permit him to monitor what is going on and to take corrective actions when appropriate. The Mayor is a struggling innovator for whom accountability appears to be very important.

- Leader A is strongly committed to neighborhood self-government and to the development of local capabilities for the development of neighborhoods as constituent elements in municipal decisionmaking. He also has unbounded confidence in the capacities of laymen to learn and apply the skills that will be required for bottom-up planning.

- Leader B is a very energetic man with extremely detailed knowledge of the workings of city government--the planning process, Council, local political relationships, Federal-State relationships, etc.
- CINC includes whites and blacks and lower to upper-middle class areas. As a group, they tend to feel that CIP allocations 1) are used for expansion, and 2) favor outlying areas of the city. In addition, they feel 3) that the city favors annexing new areas at the expense of maintaining existing areas in the city, and 4) that insufficient funds are allocated to maintain and upgrade existing services and facilities in the inner-city. The area's problems are substantial--e.g., income runs 20 percent below average city-wide levels and 67 percent of the city's dwelling units that lack plumbing facilities are located in the CINC area. In short, CINC is a "typical" inner-city area.

d. The Process

Leader A looked around the Inner-Circle area and saw torn-up streets, alleys that were practically impassible due to chuck holes and litter, storm sewers that flooded when there was a heavy rain, miles and miles of concrete with few patches of grass, and large segments of some neighborhoods that were dark at night because of little or no street lighting. In his view there was a need for roads and alleys to be resurfaced, storm sewers to be separated from sanitary sewers, for parks to be built, and street lights to be added.

Members of the CINC group had worked with each other on one or two past occasions and the CIP planning process occasioned the opportunity to work together again. Leader A called for a meeting of CINC participants, but was not able to schedule a meeting until July 18. At the July 18 meeting it was agreed that all the participants should work together and present one set of recommendations to DOD-P. Further, Leader B argued that CINC should get on the agenda of the July 23 Council meeting to express displeasure with the timing of the deadline and to alert Council and the Administration that they would be submitting a joint CIP proposal by the deadline.

As the first step in the process of arriving at a set of recommendations, time was taken during the meeting for a neighborhood-by-neighborhood elaboration and specification of needs. A July 23 meeting was scheduled to continue work on the CIP proposal and participants were asked to think about the purpose of their individual CIP proposals and how the recommendation would promote desired community objectives.

On July 23, Leader B appeared before the Clarkville Council. He pointed out that in their appearances before the Council during the previous year, representatives of neighborhood groups, civic associations, commissions, and community organizations protested the inequitable and unresponsive allocation of CIP funds. At that time, 43 percent of the population of Clarkville lived in the CINC area, but only 16 percent of the CIP funds were allocated to projects in this area. Leader B further stated that the limited time allowed for citizens to formulate an input to this year's CIP planning process appeared to be designed to restrict the quantity and quality of the input. Finally, he noted that the criteria for evaluating capital improvement recommendations were not received until July 23. This was only 4 days before the July 27 deadline for submission. In spite of the time constraints, CINC would make the deadline and would look forward to the impact that the recommendations would have on the 1976-1981 Capital Improvements Program.

The CINC participants had a series of meetings from July 23 to July 26 to refine their proposal to DOD-P. A set of goals and objectives for the Inner-Circle area were developed in conjunction with the individual recommendations of the participants.

FIGURE 1: CINC Area Goals and Objectives

1. Promote Recreation, Culture, and Open Space
    - 1.1 Promote beautification
    - 1.2 Improve outdoor recreation facilities
2. Promote Community Health
    - 2.1 Increase sewer separation
3. Improve Transportation and Communication
    - 3.1 Improve traffic flow
    - 3.2 Increase street capacity
    - 3.3 Promote traffic safety
4. Promote Community Environmental Protection
    - 4.1 Improve drainage of streets
    - 4.2 Reduce noise pollution
    - 4.3 Promote resource conservation
    - 4.4 Improve sewers
5. Promote Community Safety and Security
    - 5.1 Improve street and alley lighting
    - 5.2 Increase police protection
    - 5.3 Improve facilities serving community protection
    - 5.4 Promote safety and free movement of persons in the community
6. Promote Community Economic Development
    - 6.1 Relocate streets
7. Promote Social Involvement
    - 7.1 Promote use of and access to community facilities
8. Improve Educational and Training Opportunities
    - 8.1 Build multipurpose community recreational facilities
9. Maintain and Improve Governmental Operations
    - 9.1 Improve City's capacity to assess citizens' needs and problems

Each of the objectives were also elaborated with specific recommendations and categorized by the appropriate department or division. For example, under objective 1.2, improve outdoor recreation facilities, were recommendations with respect to Adams Park--1) upgrade playground equipment; 2) add grills and picnic tables; and 3) upgrade pond for fishing and ice skating. Concerning the need to improve street and alley lighting (5.1), the CINC participants from one neighborhood suggested that street lights be installed in the Joyce Avenue-15th Street area and that the lighting be upgraded on Fairfax Avenue from Hamilton Avenue to Oakland Place.

On July 27 the CINC participants met at City Hall to present their CIP proposal to the Department of Development. Leader A's opinion was that the recommendations were favorably received. Department officials indicated they were impressed with the amount of work and thought that had gone into the CINC recommendations. The CINC participants left the meeting with high expectations about the impact they were going to have on the Capital Improvements Program. They also believed that they were finally going to be able to impact on the general internal planning processes of DOD-P.

About 2 weeks after the CINC met with DOD, the revised CIP/CIB was ready. Advance copies were sent to citizen groups before the plan was formally presented to Council. The Inner-City citizens were outraged when they saw the DOD-P proposal program. Very few of the projects recommended by the CINC group were included in the CIP. Those projects that were included were very small and low on CINC's priority list.

When the CIP/CIB was presented to the Clarkville Council, about 200 citizens who lived in the CINC area attended the meeting. Leader A asked for an explanation of why more of the CINC recommendations were not included in the proposed CIP. For example, included in the July 6 letter was a brief description of what constituted a capital improvement and examples of projects appropriate for funding by the CIB--recreation centers, fire stations, sewer systems, water facilities, etc. Since the Inner-Circle neighborhoods are older sections of Clarkville, the sanitary sewers and the storm sewers share a common pipe system. This results in substantial local flooding during heavy rains. High on the list of priority projects in the CINC recommendations was the construction of a new sewer system so that the sanitary and storm sewers would be on separate systems.

Also high on the list of priority projects was a request for the installation of street lights in the Joyce Avenue-15th Street area. This particular section of the city is a high crime area and the residents felt that the addition of street lights would help eliminate the crime problem and make their neighborhood a safer place to live.

In response, the group was told that a new sewer system was not possible now because the capital improvement projects to be undertaken prior to 1978 were financed through bonds that had already been committed, and little flexibility exists between 1976 and 1978. A new bond package would be put together for presentation to the voters in 1978, and it could be possible for an Inner-Circle sewer system to be part of that package.

With respect to the street lights, DOD-P explained that all such requests are added to an existing list of planned installations. The CINC request for lights had been added but, due to a backlog of requests, it would be about 3 years before the lights would be installed. This did not make those citizens attending the Council meeting very happy since they had expected a more immediate turnaround.

Leader A pointed out to Council that had the CINC participants been furnished with more complete information about the CIP planning process and access to technical assistance in preparing their recommendations, they would have been able to prepare a more appropriate input that recognized the requirements of the planning process. Further, the citizens were not only mad because the CINC recommendations had not been included, but because they felt that the city government was playing a game with them. It appeared that input and recommendations were requested, but with no real intention of seriously considering them. Most of the CIP had already been developed before the solicitation of citizen input.

In their response to Leader A, Council members ensured the citizens that their intentions of involving citizens in the CIP process were sincere. Obviously, there was a lack of good communication between DOD-P and the CINC group. This lack of communication and the stage in the planning process at which citizen input was requested effectively negated the citizens' efforts. As a result, Council put a 3-month hold on granting approval of the CIP. The Department of Development was instructed to arrange a series of meetings between CINC participants and people from the various departments and divisions concerned with capital improvement projects. At these meetings city people would work with CINC representatives to refine the CINC recommendations with the intent of including as many as possible in a revised version of the CIP. This revised version would be presented to Council.

e. Discussion

The Clarkville example is based on a situation that actually occurred in a large U.S. city. It illustrates a number of the problems and benefits that can be encountered when citizens are actively involved in the processes of government.

As in Clarkville, many city governments are increasingly being called upon by citizens to be more responsive to the needs and desires expressed by the public. Moreover, citizens are asking for more systematic channels of access to government in an effort to enhance government's accountability to the citizenry. At the same time, public officials operate in a political environment in which they must allocate resources in the face of increasingly competing claims for those resources. The Clarkville Council sought to ensure that the allocation of resources for capital improvements reflected community needs as perceived by the people. The ultimate decisions about the Capital Improvements Program were the responsibility of the elected and appointed officials. However, by encouraging active citizen participation, Council hoped to facilitate the making of more informed decisions.

While the intentions of the Clarkville Council were sincere, the implementation of a citizen participation component to the CIP planning process was a disaster. A number of factors operated to convince the citizens that the whole citizen involvement aspect of the CIP process was just a sham: 1) the small amount of information and the lack of technical assistance provided by DOD; 2) the constraints imposed by the timing of the request for input; and 3) the lack of any mechanisms for facilitating effective citizen participation. These factors further increased citizens' feelings of distrust and alienation with respect to city government.

One of the functions that citizen participation can perform is an information function--disseminating and collecting information to and from citizens. While a number of benefits can accrue to both government and citizens when government encourages citizens to become involved, the achievement of these benefits can be impeded by the lack of good communications and information flow.

By involving citizens in the decisionmaking process, Clarkville officials had an opportunity to tap citizens' priorities, as well as build support for the CIP. The entire CIP could be discussed with respect to the resources available, the expressed needs of the various neighborhoods, and the relationship of both of these factors to the overall requirements of the Clarkville area. Explanations could be given to the citizen participants so that they understood why some of their recommendations were adopted and others were not.

Unfortunately, DOD-P did not set up any systematic channels of communication with the citizens. Consequently, the citizens did not understand the requirements of the CIP planning process. Since they were operating with little information and no technical assistance, their recommendations did not always lend themselves to immediate action. Some recommendations were made for projects that did not even qualify for the CIP. Citizens engaged in the process with high expectations for immediate action and then found out that any action at all would be long range at best.

An important outcome of the lack of interaction between the public officials and citizens is an increase in the feelings of alienation and apathy. More and more people are taking the view that "you can't fight city hall" or that "the government doesn't really care what the people think." The intent of the Council was to demonstrate that citizens can work with City Hall and not fight it. Because of a lack of sufficient consideration to designing a system to do that, the outcome had just the opposite effect.

In the case of Clarkville, the time constraints imposed on those who desired to have an input into the CIP planning process were considerable. The CINC had only 18 days after the receipt of the invitation for input to present written recommendations. The short time period allowed for the preparation and presentation of the CINC input raised serious doubts about the city's motives in asking for citizen involvement. Did the city government really care what the people thought, or had all the decisions already been made? Was this just a pro forma exercise so that those making the decisions could say that the citizens had a voice in the CIP allocations?

These feelings were exacerbated by the fact that the Department of Development guidelines about the criteria that would be used in evaluating projects for inclusion in the CIP package did not arrive until 4 days before the written recommendations were due. When the CINC participants reviewed the guidelines, they found that their recommendations were in fact supported by most of the criteria. They did not object so much to the criteria as they did to the timing of their release and the implications that had for the quantity and quality of the input citizens could make. It supported their feelings that the city was simply "going through the motions" of involving citizens.

Basic to any citizen participation effort are the mechanisms used as vehicles for that participation. Part of the problem with Clarkville's efforts to involve citizens in planning for the CIP was the lack of a well-thought-out citizen participation strategy. Mechanisms are needed for disseminating information to the citizens, to facilitate citizen interaction with government and each other as part of the recommendation development process, and to collect information from the citizens. The choice of the appropriate mechanism is directly related to the function to be served by the participation effort. Information flow to citizens in general or to the CINC participants in particular would have been greatly facilitated by briefings and presentations by city personnel. Through this mechanism interested parties could be informed about the CIP process, guidelines for preparing project proposals, and constraints and restrictions to be kept in mind. It would also present the opportunity for citizens to ask questions about aspects of the process they did not understand and begin the flow of two-way communication.

A number of mechanisms are appropriate for collecting information about the needs and desires of the citizenry and for arriving at concrete recommendations. A task force(s) could be formed (such as the CINC participants) to generate a coordinated input from the various neighborhoods. The Department of Development could provide staff assistance to the task force in order to answer process, substantive, and technical questions. The role of the staff would be to facilitate the development of useful and effective citizen input to the CIP. As a city-originated component or in conjunction with the task force, a social survey could be conducted to scientifically sample a cross-section of the needs of a particular geographic area(s) and/or the city as a whole. The same survey could be a means for collecting information about citizen evaluations of past capital improvement projects. In addition, the whole citizen input process could be aided by the preparation of a Capital Improvements Handbook that would include basic information about the CIP/CIB and how citizens can be involved in the planning and evaluation process.

The method of presentation of recommendations to the city will to some degree depend on the mechanisms and techniques used to generate the recommendations. Written input is fine, but should be accompanied by a verbal presentation. This allows for the highlighting of key points and for the all important two-way communication; questions can be asked, points clarified, and key elements discussed. In order to ensure the citizens that their input is important and considered, further presentations, briefings, and discussion sessions should be conducted by the city so that department personnel can explain how citizen input was used, why every project they asked for was not funded, and discuss the prospects for the future.

f. Conclusion

The Clarkville experience with involving citizens in the processes of government is typical of many cities around the country. City officials were aware of the potential payoffs and benefits that could be realized by both the city and its citizens by involving those people affected by decisions in the decisionmaking process. When the pool of resources that exist in the civic sector was tapped, the city found that tremendous interest, skill, and knowledge is available among laymen in the neighborhoods. By collecting information from individuals and groups about the needs of their communities, the work load of preparing the CIP is reduced and the final program is much more likely to be reflective of the needs and desires of the people. Further, those individuals and groups who participate in the process will expand their competence to make effective input to those decisions that impact on their daily lives.

As a result of the benefits gained from a planning process undertaken on admittedly short notice, Clarkville city officials plan to develop and refine a citizen participation program that will allow for more systematic citizen involvement in the affairs of Clarkville's government. In the future citizens will not only be involved in the planning process, but also in the implementation and evaluation of policies and programs.

2. Overview of the Curriculum

a. Introduction

The Clarkville example illustrated a number of the key elements to be considered when engaging in citizen participation efforts. This course provides information concerning the purposes, benefits, and constraints of citizen participation, as well as information pertaining to the design and implementation of alternative citizen participation mechanisms. It is based on a need expressed by urban managers (elected and appointed public officials) for a clarification and expansion of the options available for establishing a coherent, effective approach towards communication with and involvement of citizens in the processes of their government.

This course is not a cookbook or a list of steps that when followed, achieve a certain result. Rather, the material contained in the Participant's Manual provides information and guidelines to facilitate the process of evaluating alternative mechanisms and selecting the mechanism(s) most appropriate to a specific situation. The overall objective is to provide information that will increase the leadership and management capacity of urban managers to deal with citizen participation.

With the overall objective in mind, the following material is presented from the perspective of the urban manager operating in a political environment. By nature this environment is not sterile or value free. Competing claims are being continuously made for a finite amount of resources; somebody is always going to be unhappy with the decisions about how the resources are allocated. Citizen participation affords the urban manager the opportunity to get the competing claims on the table, gauge the support to the various claims, and attempt to mediate a solution.

b. Orientation of the Curriculum

The curriculum reflects an orientation toward citizen participation that emphasizes a number of major considerations. First, any effort to design and implement a citizen participation program or strategy must carefully relate the desired purposes or objectives of citizen participation to the strategies and mechanisms used to accomplish those purposes. Not all strategies and mechanisms are equally well suited to serve the same purposes.

Second, because of the diversity within communities, a single citizen participation mechanism is usually inadequate for achieving meaningful and broad-based citizen participation in a community. A broad approach to citizen participation incorporating a mixture of mechanisms and strategies is likely to be far more effective than an approach that is narrowly conceived.

Third, because of the diversity among communities and the constantly changing conditions within communities, it is inappropriate to attempt to devise a citizen participation "cookbook." It is more appropriate to provide information to facilitate the process of choosing from among alternative mechanisms. The mechanism(s) that meets the needs of a particular situation then can be adapted to the specific conditions surrounding that situation.

Fourth, successful citizen participation efforts require a great deal of work and commitment. Care needs to be taken in the design and implementation of citizen participation efforts, and this requires that any citizen participation mechanism or strategy be constantly evaluated and refined.

c. The Content of the Curriculum

The curriculum is divided into three major modules which, though related, can be presented independently. The three major modules are described below and include:

- Module I: An Overview of Citizen Participation
- Module II: Communicating With Citizens
- Module III: Citizen Participation Mechanisms

Module I provides an overview to some of the issues in citizen participation. In this overview, the urban manager is introduced to a number of issues pertaining to the involvement of citizens in governmental planning and decisionmaking:

- What is citizen participation, and why should the urban manager be concerned about it?
- What has been the evolution of citizen participation as mandated by Federal legislation?
- What are the functions that citizen participation can serve?
- What are the benefits and constraints, both to government and citizens, of involving citizens in the everyday processes of government?
- Finally, what are the various factors that one must take into consideration in order to facilitate effective citizen participation efforts?

All public involvement efforts involve some sort of communication between public officials and citizens. Given the importance of this activity, Module II covers problems and issues affecting meaningful communication. This Module helps the urban manager improve the capacity of government to communicate effectively with citizens by concentrating on the planning and use of a range of communication techniques and programs.

Specifically, this Module is divided into three sections:

- The first section presents and discusses a range of communication techniques which can be used in strengthening citizen participation.
- The second section discusses the importance of maintaining credibility when communicating with citizens.
- The third section addresses the need for urban managers to understand the role and perspective of the citizen participant as a legitimate partner in the operations of government.

The third Module on citizen participation mechanisms provides urban managers with information that allows them to examine the advantages and disadvantages of different citizen participation strategies, how these strategies relate to functions of citizen participation, and what major problems or issues are involved in the implementation of these strategies.

This module contains seven parts covering a range of citizen participation mechanisms. The major sections are:

- Temporary Convenings: Task Forces, Blue Ribbon Panels;
- Temporary Convenings: Public Hearings, Public Briefings;
- Functional Continuing Mechanisms: Commissions, Authorities, Boards, and Committees;
- Territorial Groups: Priority Boards, Neighborhood Commissions;
- Decentralization: Administrative and Political;
- Grievance Processing: Ombudsmen and Complaint Bureaus; and
- Surveys.

The discussion of these mechanisms covers the following broad areas:

- a description of the citizen participation mechanisms and how that mechanism relates to different functions of citizen participation;
- questions and problems that arise in the implementation of those mechanisms, such as what type of participants are appropriate, how should participants be selected, and how should the mechanisms be managed in terms of resources and organization; and
- a case study which illustrates how a certain type of mechanism has actually been used.

B. What Is Citizen Participation?

A remarkable political phenomenon has taken place in recent years. Individuals and groups representing a wide range of political views--liberals, conservatives, Republicans, Democrats, etc.--have all called for an increase in citizens' involvement in government. This unanimity can be deceptive, however, for the term "citizen participation" or "citizen involvement" means different things to different people.

For our purposes, citizen participation is the active involvement of citizens with government in the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of policies, strategies, and programs that are related to sustaining or improving the physical, socio-economic, or political conditions that have an impact on the quality of life in a community.[1] Effective citizen participation should provide ongoing opportunities for citizens to influence the decisionmaking process. Further, government officials should be better able to assess the needs and preferences of citizens and develop policies and programs that respond to those needs. Finally, effective citizen participation should promote greater public accountability for the effectiveness and efficiency of government programs.

There is no shortage of definitions of citizen participation. For example, Sidney Verba views citizen participation as people who are not formally empowered to make decisions engaging in acts that are intended to influence the behavior of those who do have the power to make decisions.[2] On the other hand, Sherry Arnstein talks more in terms of full managerial control rather than influence. For Arnstein, citizen participation is the strategy by which the have-nots join in determining how information is shared, goals and policies set, resources allocated, and programs operated.[3] Charles Bens is somewhere in between Verba and Arnstein. Bens defines citizen participation as a component of the democratic process which goes beyond elections and permits nonelected members of the community to exercise some control over decisionmaking.[4]

Two groups concerned with citizen participation also have similar conceptions. The Citizen Involvement Network views participation as the direct involvement of individuals in the shaping of policies and goals that affect their lives and communities.[5] The Western Regional Citizen Participation Council believes that citizen participation is a continuous structured process of citizen involvement with government in the development and execution of policies, plans, and programs.[6]

These various definitions have a number of common elements: 1) people who have not been elected or appointed to governmental decisionmaking positions are 2) actively involved, to various degrees, in all phases of the decisionmaking process 3) with those officials who have the authority to make decisions 4) in order to have an impact on those decisions and processes that will affect the citizens and the community.

Citizen participation is more than a "watchful citizenry" casting ballots at election time. Furthermore, citizen participation is not really taking place if all the issues have been defined and the alternative responses limited before citizens become involved. Connor[7] and Kumove[8] suggest a number of conditions that could be used as indicators that constructive citizen participation is taking place:

- Those people and groups of people who are likely to benefit or be otherwise affected by a decision to be made by public authority are involved as active participants.
- It is clear that the participants have a direct and well-defined role in controlling or influencing decisionmaking processes. In some cases the entire decisionmaking process might be left in the hands of the participants. In others, it may be in the hands of several groups of people, including politicians, civil servants, experts, as well as citizen participants.
- It is interaction between the citizen participants, the civil servants and experts, a give-and-take process; communication barriers are breached and mutual trust increased.
- It is a method of achieving intelligent discussion of issues, resolution of differences and/or disagreement based on rationality and principle with respect for differing opinions and without fear or suspicion.
- Citizens find early and convenient opportunities to make positive contributions.
- Citizens acquire a broader and deeper understanding of their environment, its potential, and its fragility.
- Individuals, interest groups, and agencies identify their own positions, recognize those of others, and work towards a win-win solution cooperatively rather than become locked into a destructive win-lose or lose-lose pattern.
- Those engaging in participatory techniques are representative of and accountable to the community or constituency they represent and include significant consumer members.
- Citizens have timely and accurate information to assess alternatives and formulate recommendations.
- Participants have adequate training and technical assistance and other support services to effectively respond to and develop proposals, policies, programs, etc.
- Citizens are meaningfully involved in identifying community needs, setting goals and objectives, and overseeing the performance of community institutions.

However one defines citizen participation, it is important to remember that the involvement of citizens in the affairs of government is not intended to solve all the problems of the decisionmaker. It may even create some new problem to be dealt with: longer time required to reach a final decision; increased conflict over the allocation of resources; and increased costs to manage the participation effort.

Nevertheless, with tight money and demands from citizens for increased services, citizen participation can aid the public official in determining the perceived needs of the citizens. When conflicts arise among various interests in the community about the priorities attached to the various needs, the decision becomes political rather than managerial. The political aspect of decisionmaking always exists. Choices must be made from among competing claims for the same resources. Citizen participation can facilitate the making of these choices by getting the issues out on the table, generating information about the competing claims, and providing a mechanism for promoting mediation of the conflicts.

In module three of this curriculum, seven types of mechanisms that can be used by government officials when engaging in citizen participation are presented:

- Temporary Convenings: Task Forces, Blue Ribbon Panels;
- Temporary Convenings: Public Hearings, Public Briefings;
- Territorial Groups: Priority Boards, Neighborhood Commissions;
- Functional Continuing Mechanisms: Commissions, Authorities, Boards, and Committees;
- Decentralization: Administrative and Political;
- Grievance Processing: Ombudsmen and Complaint Bureaus; and
- Surveys.

These various mechanisms promote and facilitate the involvement of citizens in the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of those governmental activities that impact on their lives and the community. For example, task forces are useful for engaging citizens in the design and development of policies and programs. Public briefings can disseminate information to citizens that is necessary for citizens to be able to make informed input to the planning process. Public hearings give citizens an opportunity to react to policies and programs enacted by government as well as to present their ideas.

The various functional mechanisms--e.g., planning commissions, zoning boards, airport commissions--have citizen members who perform review, advisory, and administrative duties. These mechanisms facilitate all the areas of citizen involvement, from design to evaluation. Because of the nature of the functional areas, most of the activity is concerned with policies, as opposed to specific programs or projects.

Mechanisms that physically decentralize governmental delivery systems or organize citizens who live in certain areas of town into groups to safeguard or promote the welfare of these areas can also involve citizens in all phases of government decisionmaking. For example, needs expressed by neighborhood groups or feedback they provide on government programs and policies can be used in design, development, and evaluation; and when combined with other activities, decentralized delivery systems can improve how efficiently government programs are implemented.

Mechanisms that are specifically designed to process grievances citizens have against government, or respond to requests citizens have for information or assistance, impact directly on governmental accountability. They provide information to citizens and to government about policies and personnel that are not meeting citizen needs or priorities, and that can be used to evaluate programs and improve their implementation.

Finally, mechanisms--such as surveys--that systematically solicit information pertaining to the knowledge, behavior, opinions, and preferences of citizens facilitate the evaluation of existing programs and policies, as well as the design, development, and implementation of new programs and policies.

C. Why Should We Have Citizen Participation?

1. Introduction

During the 1960's the terms "citizen participation" and "citizen involvement" became integral parts of the popular political vocabulary. While participation in a democratic society--i.e., the involvement, interaction, and influence of citizens with government--has long been valued. Its importance has assumed new dimensions during the last decade. This increased concern with the active involvement of citizens in governmental planning and decisionmaking can be traced to several factors:

- the political organization of minority groups and their demands for greater access to the decisionmaking process, and the demands expressed across several levels of society to return power to the people;
- the public's increased desire for more open government and greater accountability;
- the inability of many governmental units to correctly identify and solve social problems despite massive investments aimed at creating "the great society"; and
- the participation requirements of Federal grant programs, as well as the perspective expressed by many local officials that citizens should have greater opportunities for input into the policies and programs that affect their lives.

The unresponsiveness of government and failures of the political system have become primary justifications for much of the demand for increased citizen participation.

Consequently, new approaches to the design, development, and implementation of public policy have emerged which have significant implications for the relationship between citizens and government. One of the most important of these new approaches has been the philosophy of New Federalism and the assumption that effective public policy and the improved quality of governmental services necessitates closer relationships between government and the people. Increased citizen participation is seen as a way of enhancing the capacity of citizens to gain social benefits by exercising more direct control over the policy, planning, and operations of their government. Increased involvement is also seen as a way to promote the participatory values of a democratic society.

Thus, two distinct attitudes toward the role of citizen participation in our society are evident. Citizen participation is viewed as a mechanism for obtaining desired social benefits and is, therefore, a means to an end. The end may be better housing for the poor (social benefit) and citizen participation is a technique used to help achieve that end. In this instance, citizen participation is evaluated in terms of the efficiency and effectiveness of the procedures as a technique for securing better housing.

On the other hand, citizen participation can also be viewed as a mechanism for achieving more responsive government and is, therefore, an end in itself. This view of citizen participation is the call for participatory or more direct democracy. Citizen participation is valued as an end in and of itself because it serves the principles of democratic theory. Consistency with society's values becomes the yardstick for evaluating the desirability of citizen participation.

Unlike those who discuss citizen participation as either a means to an end or an end in itself, the perspective taken here is that citizen involvement is important and desirable for both reasons and can satisfy both simultaneously. Participation is valued because it is basic to society's views about democracy and because of what it can do for government as well as individual citizens.

2. The Reasons For Encouraging Citizen Participation

a. Strengthening Our Democratic System

Citizen participation and the "consent of the governed" are basic to the concept of a democratic society and are key elements in those processes that strengthen our democratic system. Participation is more than just a way to help achieve the objectives of a government program. It is the process and procedure to be followed regardless of the consequences of the particular program.

The consent process is an attempt at balancing authority with accountability so that no one group can deny economic or social justice to any other group. The action of consent recognizes authority and enables a governing body to function in the public interest. Thus, two of the key issues of democratic theory concern the degree of discretion to be allowed the representative and the form and degree of citizen involvement in governmental processes--the role that the citizens play in the democratic decisionmaking process.

Athens and the New England town meetings are often cited as examples of participatory democracy. The ancient Greek city-states were direct democracies; the whole citizen body formed the legislature and each citizen enjoyed the right to attend the legislative body and vote. This was possible because the number of participants was limited--the city-states seldom grew larger than 10,000 in population. Further, the citizen body was not identical with the adult population; women and slaves did not have any political rights.

The intense participatory aspect of Greek government has a parallel in the American experience: the New England town meeting. Just as in Greece, direct democracy was possible because of the small size of the communities. The franchise was also severely restricted--only males who were church members in good standing could vote. Thus, the classical form of democracy stressed the involvement of all "eligible" citizens on an active and continuing basis.

Twentieth century democracy differs in that it is a representative democracy and generally based on a single-member territorial constituency. The role of the representative in this type of system has long been the subject of debate. There are those who see democracy not as a political system which involves its members in continuous and active participation, but a system in which the role of the citizen is limited essentially to approval or disapproval of the policies and programs developed by educated, interested, and benevolent leadership groups and elites.

In order to gain support at the polls on election day, political leaders attempt to anticipate public reaction and shape public policy to fit the citizens' desires. Even though he does not initiate policy, the citizen does have some measure of effective political power if he chooses to exercise his right to vote in regularly scheduled elections.

Attitudes toward the role of citizen participation are related to how one views the democratic system. If the few are to make the decisions for the many, then the scope of citizen participation is limited--passive, indirect, and sporadic involvement. If, on the other hand, one subscribes to the view that a democratic system must rest on genuine and direct citizen involvement, the scope of participation is greater and presumes that citizens have an active and continuous role.

Perhaps one of the most important values expressed in classical democratic theory was the emphasis on individual participation in the development of public policy. The consequent development of the social and political capacities of the citizens promotes a gain in knowledge and understanding, facilitates development of a deeper sense of social responsibility, and broadens citizen perspectives beyond the narrow confines of their private lives. The more opportunities citizens have to participate, the better able they become to do so.

Thus, the basic principles of our democratic society, that:

- the people themselves have the capacity for government;
- society's leadership can and must rely on the wisdom and authority it derives from the consent of its members; and
- a free people have the right to join forces with one another to pursue their common purposes[9]

are directly tied to citizen involvement in the affairs of their government as it touches their daily lives.

Some argue that since we have a representative form of government, citizen involvement in the decisionmaking processes is redundant and burdensome. They feel that:

- continuous citizen involvement conflicts with our form of government in which we elect representatives whom we charge with making necessary public decisions in our interest;

- our leaders must already respond to voters, legislators, other institutions, and external interest groups; if they have to consult with the public on every major decision, necessary actions will be frequently delayed--and people will lose further confidence in government's ability to respond; and
- most citizens do not have the knowledge, perspective, and experience to contribute meaningfully to public decisionmaking.[10]

However, citizen participation is not a process that requires leaders to abdicate decisionmaking to their constituents. Public officials alone are accountable for final decisionmaking responsibility. It is not a matter of citizens wanting to change the system of governance, but rather a desire on the part of citizens for considerably more opportunity to express their own needs and priorities, examine policy alternatives, and press for changes they feel are needed. Any disadvantage that might arise from the process of citizen participation (e.g., increased time required to get a decision made) is cancelled by the opportunity citizen participation presents for citizens to: 1) transmit their needs, problems, and ideas to government officials; 2) participate in the decisionmaking process; and 3) actively confront, discuss, and attempt to resolve issues as they are identified rather than once every few years at the ballot box.

b. Citizen Participation Can Serve the Government

Perhaps the most important practical reason for promoting increased citizen participation is its usefulness as an aid to decisionmaking. By involving those affected by the decisions, participation can help to ensure that the decisions reflect the needs of the citizens and therefore are more beneficial to both citizens and government. Giving citizens a major part in shaping goals, priorities, programs, and evaluating results imparts the perspective of the consumer, the person who must live with the end results of those efforts. The process can release creativity at the grass roots level, provide relevant information not otherwise available, and provide a way to tap talent banks of citizens who are ready and capable of assisting in the planning and implementation of local policies and programs. The significance of citizen participation is not that it gives broad control to citizens, or that citizens make decisions for the public official, but that it provides for two-way communication between citizens and those government officials who have responsibility for making decisions.

The relationship between citizen participation and the decisionmaking of public officials is similar to the relationship between a patient and doctor. A doctor would not make a decision about an operation without first consulting with the patient about his symptoms and preferences; the patient is the only person who can say where it hurts and what he prefers. The doctor, on the other hand, is the expert on medical diagnosis and prescription of treatment. The doctor takes the information provided by the patient and, with the aid of his own technical expertise, reaches a decision with the patient. Information from both "experts" is utilized in making the decision.

Likewise, the individual citizens are the only people who can be experts on their own needs, values, and preferences. Even though in most instances the urban managers must take the responsibility for making final decisions about a given course of action, consideration must be given to the judgments of citizens who will be affected by those decisions.

Citizen participation also can help facilitate the implementation of policies and programs. The potential for confrontation can be reduced by enlisting the support of citizens during the problem definition and program formulation stage. Implementation is aided if citizen participation is employed on the front end, and the program reflects the needs and desires of the citizens as they perceive them. Citizens are much more likely to support a program in which they have a vested interest.

A democratic society is based to a large degree on voluntary acceptance of the decisions made by public officials. This in turn depends on the degree of congruence between public policy and public opinion. The likelihood that a high degree of congruence will be achieved is greatly enhanced if citizens have a real opportunity to contribute to the making of those decisions.

An evaluative and corrective function can also be served by providing the mechanisms for securing feedback on existing policies and programs. Public officials can use this feedback to improve the quality and responsiveness of governmental decisionmaking.

While the involvement of citizens in the planning and decisionmaking process may facilitate the making of more rational decisions, this does not mean that it is necessarily easier for the public official to make the decision. The political environment in which the public official must function is not a value-free system. In addition, citizen participation is not a simplistic, mechanistic process. Various interests voice competing claims for a finite amount of resources. The different value structures associated with these competing claims generally assures that there will always exist some group that does not agree with the decisions that are made.

Nevertheless, the public official can employ citizen participation to get the issues surrounding a decision on the table in such a way as to facilitate action--what are the basic issues and their competing claims; what is the degree of support for the various claims; and is there a way to mediate competing claims.

In the end, the public official has to make the decision; but he can do so with information about how the citizens perceive their needs, preferences, and priorities. This is not to say that this information or public input alone should make the decision for the official. It is one of the factors (albeit, a very important one) which should be weighed when making the decision.

The value of citizen participation in the planning and policymaking of government has been recognized by those charged with making the decisions. Citizen involvement has been seen by many as essential to the effective functioning of local government. Officials have expressed a need to improve methods to identify resources within the community, establish effective two-way communications with the public, actively involve citizens in the decisionmaking process, and promote greater mutual awareness of the problems of local government.

For example, in 1968 the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorder (Kerner Commission) endorsed the proposal that:

- city governments need new and more vital channels of communication;
- improvement is needed in the capacity of city governments to respond effectively to community needs; and
- city governments need to provide opportunity for meaningful involvements of residents in shaping policies and programs which affect the community.

The Commission felt that such involvement would increase the quality of services to the community, increase feelings of political efficacy among citizens, increase administrative attentiveness to neighborhood needs, develop citizen leadership, and promote community cohesion.

Further, a 1971 Fels Institute Study based on the responses of 133 top-level urban administrators provides some indication of how citizen participation is perceived in relation to present and future management needs. With respect to 12 different public management functions (all dealing with policy or resource management), respondents were asked to describe their current level of involvement and to estimate the likely future importance of each of the 12 functions. The data from the Fels study have been reassembled to permit a quantitative estimate of the differences anticipated by the respondents between how they presently spend their time and how they think they will spend their time in the future (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2: The Present and Future Importance of Twelve Public Management Functions Reported by Urban Administrators

Public Management Functions	Future Importance Index	(Rank)	Present Involvement Index	(Rank)
Citizen Participation	.78	(1)	.66	(12)
Intergovernmental relations	.76	(2)	.75	(8)
Labor relations	.57	(3)	.69	(11)
Priority determination	.55	(4)	.77	(5)
Budget	.49	(5)	.86	(1)
Direct politically sensitive programs	.47	(6)	.76	(6)
Communications systems	.47	(7)	.69	(10)
Program design	.45	(8)	.77	(4)
Relations with governing body	.43	(9)	.83	(2)
Determine operating procedures	.32	(10)	.76	(7)
Personnel administration	.31	(11)	.75	(9)
Organizational structure	.29	(12)	.81	(3)

Source: "Strengthening Public Management in the Intergovernmental System." A Report Prepared for the Office of Management and Budget by the Study Committee on Policy Management Assistance (1975).

Analysis of the results indicates a negative correlation between present and anticipated future involvement in each public management category. In other words, the present is not a good predictor of future public management priorities. Moreover, those functions presently making the greatest demands (budget, relations with governing body, organizational structure, and program design) on the time and attention of the public administrator will in the future rank far down the scale; citizen participation, intergovernmental relations, labor relations, and priority determination will be foremost. It is particularly interesting to note that citizen participation ranked last on the present involvement index, but ranked first when considering its future importance as a management function.

c. Citizen Participation Can Serve the Citizen

In addition to strengthening the democratic system and aiding the decisionmaking process, increased attention is being given to encouraging citizen participation as a means for reducing feelings of alienation and apathy. Increased and effective interaction between citizens and government helps overcome feelings of alienation and apathy and strengthens citizens' commitment to their community.

When citizens are actively involved in the governmental processes that impact and affect their lives, they acquire a sense of ownership with respect to what happens in their community. They are more likely to become psychologically attached to the decisionmaking body. The linkages developed as part of the citizen participation process can produce an increased sense of cohesiveness between citizens and government. As a result, citizens acquire a better understanding of the intricacy and complexity of the problems facing the public official. A political system that facilitates citizen access to the channels for participation will stimulate citizens to be more attentive to politically relevant information and provide incentive for taking the trouble to think about public programs.

Many public officials do not interpret lack of citizen involvement as an indication of alienation or apathy, but rather as an expression of satisfaction. Consequently, they may also believe that citizens do not want to be bothered by the processes and procedures of planning and decisionmaking. Under these circumstances, few incentives exist for officials to encourage and foster the active involvement of the public in the affairs of their government.

Contrary to the perceptions of many public officials, opinion surveys of the general population have documented increasing feelings of alienation. Support for the contention that feelings of political efficacy (the feeling that an individual can have an impact upon the political process) and political trust (the basic evaluative orientation toward government) are on the decline is evident in studies conducted by the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center.[11]

These same studies indicated that, over the past decade and a half, there has been an increase in the general level of education of citizens, but a decrease in their understanding of government. That is, the capacity of individuals to understand has increased, but actual understanding has decreased. This has led to basic discontent and a lack of a positive feeling about their ability to have an impact on the governmental machinery. A similar decrease in feelings of political trust is also evident.

Without the prospect of some practical use with a visible effect, there is little motivation to encourage citizens to pursue solutions to their problems through the mechanisms of citizen participation. To the degree that citizen participation can help overcome feelings of helplessness and ignorance, it will contribute to reversing the present trend of increasing political alienation. If, on the other hand, attempts at involvement produce results that are either frustrating to a sense of individual potency or fail to increase (or at least maintain for some) the sense of importance, then cynicism may develop to the point where "the consent of the governed" is withdrawn and involvement becomes manifest in more violent forms.

d. Summary

Government can better serve citizens and progress in an orderly manner if it is clearly determined and understood what is wanted, needed, and expected by the citizens. It is equally important that citizens understand what resources are required by government to deliver as expected. The frustrations of services needed and not rendered has often interfered in the channels of communication that have been available, thus adding to the difficulties of operating in a productive manner for the common good. Citizen participation helps ensure that policies and programs come about by design, and not by default.

As a result of problems such as unemployment, crime, drugs, housing, environmental, and social service needs, effective communication between government and citizens becomes of vital importance. It has become extremely important that citizens become educated to the acute problems facing urban government and understand clearly the role they can play in the policies and programs intended to address the problems facing their community. The sheer magnitude, complexity, and future ramifications of urban problems dictate that the various elements and resources available in the community must be united toward common goals. A climate of mutual trust will better able citizens and government to work together for a better community.

Whatever the rhetoric used to justify increasing citizen participation, most potential participants will determine their level of participation based on an evaluation of the benefits which they can derive. As far as citizens are concerned, these benefits could include:

- regular and meaningful access to the planning and decisionmaking officials and processes that, in large part, determine the quality of life for the community; and

- an opportunity to foster broader public support and understanding for their interests when setting community directions.

On the other hand, for the public officials who have been elected or appointed to govern the community, increased citizen participation can:

- promote better access to the opinions of more citizens;

- facilitate the exchange of information to and from citizens;

- reduce feelings of alienation, apathy, and distrust; and

- foster a better understanding of the capabilities and limitations of local government officials and agencies in providing for the needs of the citizenry.

3. The Functions of Citizen Participation

a. Introduction

Citizen participation can serve a number of broad functions, the most common being the: 1) informational, 2) accessibility, 3) involvement, and 4) accountability functions. These functions are related to the reasons and benefits of citizen participation, as well as to the various forms or mechanisms of participation.

The active involvement of citizens in the processes of government--and the resulting accountability of government--are major underpinnings of our democratic society. Participation mechanisms that facilitate involvement and accountability promote the fulfillment of democratic principles and strengthen the system.

Government decisionmaking is aided when participation facilitates the flow of information between the government and the citizens. Increased citizen involvement coupled with the accessibility of public officials to citizens leads to the development of policies and programs that are reflective of the needs of the community.

To the degree that the various mechanisms for citizen involvement promote accessibility and accountability, feelings of alienation, apathy, and political distrust can be reduced. Citizens begin to realize that government does want to hear what they have to say and that their views have an impact. Moreover, increased accountability takes place in an atmosphere of cooperation rather than conflict.

In order for citizen participation to be maximally useful to both government and the citizen, it is important to specify at the outset the role citizen participation is going to play and the desired outcome of the citizen involvement. This becomes especially important since the particular citizen participation mechanism most appropriate to use will, to a large degree, be determined by the function that citizen participation is intended to serve. For example, social surveys more appropriately serve an information function as opposed to an accessibility function. Very accurate information can be collected through a survey, but it doesn't promote (directly) the access of citizens to public officials.

This is not to say that each citizen participation mechanism or technique is useful for only one function. A wide variety of mechanisms may be available for any given function to be served. The selection of the most appropriate mechanism will reflect the resources and constraints associated with the particular situation--cost, available staff, time lines, etc.

b. The Information Function

The information function of citizen participation has two components: 1) information dissemination, and 2) information collection. A particular mechanism that is very useful for disseminating information to the public may not be a good technique for collecting information from the public, and vice versa. Nevertheless, both mechanisms are still performing an informational function.

Information Dissemination. The need to disseminate information can occur for any number of reasons. For example, to inform the public about the intended planning process of an agency and the opportunities and process whereby citizens can have input into the planning process. An agency may already have formulated a preliminary plan of action (programs) for the year and this information needs to be disseminated for public reaction and comment. Thus, information dissemination mechanisms can be used to transmit and amplify both procedural and substantive information.

Those who receive information represent a variety of perspectives and needs, and information requirements vary widely from issue to issue (e.g., compare zoning issues with Revenue Sharing issues). Consequently, information dissemination strategies should include: 1) a systematic use of multiple channels of information dissemination; 2) the use of specialized information tailored closely to the unique needs of different functional, territorial, or public interest groups; and 3) the use of information appropriate to the unique requirements of different issue areas.

Public information programs--hot lines, public meetings, presentations to groups, direct mailings--and the use of the mass media are examples of techniques that are useful for the purpose of information dissemination.

Information Collection. Information is often collected from the public in an effort to ascertain citizen attitudes, perceived needs, priorities, and evaluations. As with information dissemination, a number of techniques are available for the purpose of collecting information. Among appropriate collection mechanisms are techniques such as public opinion surveys, advisory groups, community-sponsored meetings, public hearings, and the analysis of incoming mail and telephone calls. The use of an ombudsman is a specialized information collection technique whose purpose is to receive and act on complaints from citizens. Because of the unique position an ombudsman occupies, he or she is able to perform an information collection function that is useful for highlighting those aspects of the system that are not working as well as desired. While an ombudsman is not usually involved in the routine conduction of the participatory process, the mechanism is an important information collection technique.

c. The Accessibility Function

Accessibility strategies are used to make government more open, more approachable, and more penetrable, both to individual citizens and to citizen groups. Increasing accessibility requires identifying and reducing the physical, social, and psychological barriers that citizens encounter when interacting with government. It also involves creating opportunities for increasing the frequency, regularity, and quality of a citizen-government interaction.

It is important to differentiate the issue of access for citizens acting as individuals and access for citizen groups. Individuals typically seek access to obtain information, to seek redress for grievances, or to give suggestions. Most access by individual citizens occurs in routine areas (e.g., licensing) or to register a complaint where broad-scale programs or service operations that may be working well for most people, are failing to serve the unique needs of the individual or to meet his expectations.

Mechanisms to facilitate access for the individual citizen are likely to be quite different from those designed to facilitate group access. Demands for group access are likely to call for periodic interaction rather than the episodic access that the individual citizen displays. A group will often seek access at the level of planning and policymaking, while the individual will tend to want access around issues related to operations. Citizens will tend to seek access at either the lowest or the highest levels of the government, while groups will also want to interact on a regular and continuing basis with middle-management personnel. Consequently, the design of accessibility strategies must take into account the different needs of citizens in contrast to those of groups.

A key point to remember concerning strategies to increase accessibility is that when citizens and government officials work together to solve problems, it is an interactive process. Both the citizens and administrators are asking questions and responding to each other, and exchanging information and comments. The transfer of information between the citizens and the public officials is secondary to the purpose of working together to solve community problems, and thus, differs from the purely informational function of citizen participation.

Within the interactive process citizens can perform the role of initiators or reactors. As initiators, members of the community assume responsibility for assessing needs, structuring options, prioritizing alternatives, and producing proposals. In order to facilitate this process, government must facilitate access to information and technical assistance as well as access to public officials.

When individual citizens and community groups take on the role of reactors, the responsibility for producing the initial proposal for a course of action is assumed by a government agency, for example, Citizens can then play an active role by reacting to the proposal and participating in the process that will determine modifications and the production of a finished proposal. A number of different forms of citizen participation can be used when attempting to maximize the interactive function--citizens' advisory committees, task forces, workshops, advocacy planning, neighborhood planning councils, and charrettes.

d. The Involvement Function

Involvement strategies are used to develop structures, processes, and policies that will facilitate the involvement of citizens--and particularly the involvement of citizens' groups--in the planning and policymaking process. Mechanisms to promote involvement should be designed to involve citizens in decisions affecting the future shape of the community, in the goal setting and planning process, in decisions related to the appraisal of city services, and in the initiation of new or the termination of old programs.

Owing to the wealth of intelligence about local needs and the effectiveness of city services among citizens at the neighborhood level, and in view of the substantial talent base in the civic sector of the community, the involvement function is served by encouraging and giving locally initiated efforts to establish goals, set priorities, and undertake preliminary planning.

At the same time, it should be noted that a rich variety of social structures, agencies, and other mechanisms already exist in the civic sector of the community. Given the variety of local and functional area needs in the community, involvement can be facilitated by being responsive to existing structures, as well as to grass roots demands for the creation of new structures. This is in contrast to a wholesale program initiated by government that would create a single set of structures and related processes.

The involvement function also provides for citizen assurance and process support. Even if an agency has good readings of citizen values and priorities, it is important that the citizens know that their preferences have been heard and integrated into the decisionmaking process. This enhances the individual's sense of worth and reduces feelings of alienation and apathy. Ad hoc committees, advisory groups, workshops, presentations to groups, and contacts with key individuals in the community are techniques which aid in promoting citizen assurance and a sense of efficacy.

The use of other techniques such as citizen training, technical assistance, gaming and simulation, and group dynamics help make the use of other citizen participation techniques more effective. Citizen training, gaming and simulation, and group dynamics are intended to improve skills necessary for planning, group interaction, and leadership. To the degree that these skills can be enhanced, citizens will have improved their ability to participate in a meaningful and effective way in governmental decisionmaking.

Providing direct technical assistance to citizen groups is another way to indicate that their input is wanted, and at the same time provide support to the citizen participation process--the better the information and assistance provided to the citizens, the better their input, and the more they are able to be an effective aid to the decisionmaking process. Citizen training and technical assistance can help insure that disagreements between citizens and government pertain to substantive issues rather than whether or not government is trying to shut out citizen input or stifle controversy.

e. The Accountability Function

Accountability strategies are used to assess citizen or client satisfaction with services and to detect areas where either new initiatives or corrective actions are needed in order to maintain a balance between promise and performance.

Mechanisms that are appropriate for promoting accountability must include ways and means for the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of policies, plans, and operations on the community as a whole, as well as its constituent parts. Feedback from citizens is one major source of information that can be used to monitor and evaluate this impact.

The accountability function of citizen participation is also served when government attempts to fulfill requirements for public involvement that come from outside the day-to-day operation of the government agencies. In situations where there is little vocal demand from the public or from government personnel for citizen participation, legal requirements of legislation or an adherence to those norms that are supportive of the democratic process may promote the involvement of citizens. Often this function comes to the fore when the goal is to demonstrate (e.g., to the Federal agency providing the funds) that a given program has provided an open process and ample opportunity for citizen involvement.

f. Long-Term Convenings and the Functions of Citizen Participation

The following is a brief example of how one type of mechanism--blue ribbon panels and task forces--relates to the broad functions of citizen participation. The relationship between mechanisms (form) and function is determined by the inherent characteristics of the mechanism and the intended purpose of those involved.

- Information Function--Both the collection and dissemination functions can be served to some degree by this mechanism. It works well for pooling the talent and knowledge of key individuals, but may not be representative of the community. The mechanism is not appropropriate for large scale information dissemination due to the limited size of the group.

- Accessibility Function--Access to government officials can be increased, but only in a limited way. Access is only increased for a limited number of participants to a limited number of officials.

- Involvement Function--Blue ribbon panels and task forces are good mechanisms for involving citizens in governmental operations. The amount of impact the group will have is related to such factors as the quality of the participants, the particular topic area, and the role and responsibility of the group. One drawback is that for any particular group, involvement is limited to a relatively small number of people.

- Accountability Function--This function is generally served when the group is examining public action and making recommendations concerning policies or programs. The degree to which use of the mechanisms enhance governmental accountability depends on the type of participants, the amount of independence the group has, and the amount of publicity given to the process.

4. The Constraints of Citizen Participation

a. Introduction

A number of constraints can be incurred any time an attempt is made to involve citizens in the planning and decisionmaking processes of their government. Effective citizen participation requires time and effort and generally increases the time necessary to reach decisions, requires more staff, might necessitate the provision of technical assistance and support, and thus consume more of one of the scarcest resources--money (see Figure 3). Local government officials have also mentioned the pressure to deliver, the difficulty in maintaining citizen interest, and a lack of citizen leadership as barriers to effective citizen involvement.

b. Increased Costs

Unfortunately, for most situations the more citizen participation desired, the more expensive it is in terms of the resources required--time, staff, and money. The potentially least expensive citizen involvement mechanisms--appointments to boards, commissions, ad hoc committees, written testimony, etc.--are limited in the number of citizens that they are able to involve in the process. Further, if resources such as technical assistance and staff time are not available to citizens using these techniques, the probability of having an impact on the decisionmaking process is reduced.

Public meetings and presentations are flexible and the meetings themselves are not very expensive to run. The success of the meeting is often dependent upon the amount of publicity that preceeded the meeting and the amount and type of information provided--both factors can increase the costs associated with utilizing the technique.

FIGURE 3: Major Barriers to Citizen Participation as Viewed by Municipal Officials

Barrier	Importance*
Inadequate financial resources	.70
Time required	.70
Inadequate staff resources	.68
Difficulty in maintaining citizen interest	.68
Pressure to deliver	.68
Lack of citizen leadership	.64
Hostility	.62
Inadequate means of communication	.60
Difficulty in maintaining the interest of public officials	.52
High turnover in leadership	.42

*The "importance" of the barrier is measured on a scale from 0.0-1.0. Thus, the higher the number, the more important the barrier. Source: Adopted from ICMA, Report of the Management Criteria Task Force (Washington, D.C.), August, 1972 (p. 36).

Local neighborhood offices can provide a point of involvement for a large number of citizens, but can also be very expensive. Meeting facilities, equipment, service offices, staff assigned to the office, etc., all contribute to the high cost of operating a neighborhood office as a facilitator for citizen participation.

The public survey is a citizen participation technique that can collect a wide variety of data concerning the knowledge, attitudes, practices, needs, and priorities of large numbers of people. Moreover, if the technique is used properly, the views of the target population can be discussed with a known degree of statistical error. But the costs that go along with planning, sampling, questionnaire design and development, training, interviewing, data processing, and analysis can be substantial. All in all, those methods that permit the fullest participation and generate the most "valid" information are the techniques that require the most resources in terms of time, money, and administrative efficiency.

c. Complicate the Decisionmaking Process

When citizen participation is successful, it can aid the decisionmaking of government officials. This does not mean that the decisions will be easier to make--just the opposite is likely to be the case. Citizen involvement tends to prolong debate on an issue and increase the likelihood of disagreement and conflict, especially if the issue is of a controversial nature. The views of those opposed to a particular course of action gain visibility, and the official is made aware of a range of complexities and conflicts which he might otherwise have been able to ignore without such input. The result may be a deadlock or a substantial modification of the original proposal as made by the government agency.

d. Promotes a Parochial Perspective

Another constraint of citizen participation is that it is typically focused on a locality-based vested interest--e.g., a neighborhood. Citizens become involved on behalf of their own particular geographical area and are less concerned about the community as a whole or other individual localities. If the participation techniques are successful, the result is a disproportionate allocation of the community's resources to the specific locality whose citizens have been influential in the planning and decisionmaking process.

e. The Dilemma of Representation

One of the ongoing questions related to the operation of the government is concerned with who should represent the views of the citizens. How and to what degree do citizens participate in conducting the affairs of government?

Perhaps the extreme position is exemplified by those who view citizen participation as a plebiscite. It then becomes self-defeating for government to support and encourage citizen participation since it is not possible to take a plebiscite about each proposed government policy or program. The involvement of citizens becomes a usurpation of the responsibilities and authority of government officials. Those that hold this view feel that the appropriate mode for citizen participation is through the ballot box--citizens elect officials to act in the best interest of the public; if the officials become unresponsive, vote them out. The elected officials are the representatives of the people and as such, it is through these representatives that the public participates.

The concept of representation is an elusive one at best. What is the obligation of a representative? Should he act as he deems best given his own views and his perception of particular situations, or should he act as the majority of his constituents would act? When government officials are confronted by citizens' groups, the officials are almost certain to ask the group spokesman: "Who do you speak for and how many people do you represent?" Perhaps what the officials really want to know is: "Why should we support your proposal or your point of view, and where is your mandate?" The answers to these questions are not really the issue, but rather the right of citizens' groups to be heard and respected as legitimate manifestations of public opinion is the crux of the matter.

The rationale for citizen participation mechanisms at the neighborhood level, for example, is that citizens who are familiar with neighborhood needs and priorities on a first-hand basis are often in a better position to conduct this assessment than government officials and administrators. In other words, when dealing with localized concerns, indigenous citizens are more likely to represent the true views of the people being served than officials who are responsible for a broader jurisdiction.

The authority of local officials is derived from statutes, but the sources of authority which legitimate judgments by members of neighborhood task forces, citizen advisory committees, etc., are by no means as clear. This is, in part, due to the fact that the responsibilities of those who interact with government through these mechanisms have not been clearly defined; many people are not certain about what these vehicles should do, or how officials and administrators should respond to them. These same officials are conscious of a responsibility to the broader electorate and are often not willing to relinquish prerogatives to citizen groups with more parochial interests.

The appearance of solidarity is important to the image of representativeness of citizen groups. This solidarity is manifest in at least two ways: 1) the lack of competing claims from other dissident groups; and 2) the open expressions of support for the positions taken by citizen groups. The response of officials to the concerns of citizen groups influences the solidarity of these groups. Denial of all requests or demands emanating from the neighborhood can serve as a catalyst to bring all concerned citizens together in opposition to the establishment. On the other hand, citizens may view this as evidence that government doesn't really care about their input. If denials are necessary, public officials should explain the reasons behind them. Otherwise, feelings of political distrust, alienation, and apathy will take over. At the same time, acceptance of recommendations and proposals made through citizen participation groups is likely to add to its legitimacy, enhance its following, and hence, the image of representativeness of that group.

Part of the solution to the problem of the representativeness of citizen participation efforts is the maintenance of multiple channels for citizen participation. An overall citizen participation effort could include a wide variety of citizen inputs: letters, phone calls, visits, town meetings, task forces, advisory commissions, social surveys, etc. Citizens would have an opportunity to be involved and make their voices heard through a number of mechanisms with no one particular group purporting to be the voice of the people. Public officials would then consider these multiple inputs as one factor among many to be evaluated during the decisionmaking process.

D. The Development of Citizen Participation Through Federal Legislation

1. Introduction

Due in large part to the Civil Rights movement and grass roots political mobilization, citizen participation took on new meaning during the 1960's. Rather than being a strategy for program implementation, citizen participation became a social movement of considerable force. The legitimacy of the political system was being questioned and protests progressed from legal action and peaceful demonstrations to violent urban riots. The response of the Federal government took two forms: 1) the allocation of more resources to redistributive programs aimed at disadvantaged and minority groups; and 2) an attempt to use these programs as leverage on local governments in order to increase the participation of the poor in political decisionmaking.

The purposes for engaging in citizen participation as outlined in various pieces of Federal legislation are very similar to the general purposes discussed previously in this module. The involvement of citizens in Federal programs is seen as a way to:

- build support for the program so that the program's constituency will look favorably on the program efforts;
- facilitate the participation of the intended constituency or users in a process that is intended to be of benefit to them;
- promote the development of structures and processes that citizens can use to influence the distribution of resources; and
- reduce feelings of apathy and alienation.

The promotion of increased citizen involvement in setting priorities and making decisions which affect their lives has had an impact on the planning and decisionmaking processes during the past 25 years. This is not to say that a single Federal policy toward citizen participation exists. On the one hand, the administrative guidelines of Federal programs have specified the formation of specific structures, such as task forces or advisory boards, to oversee narrowly defined programs--such as mental health centers, and Headstart programs. On the other hand, guidelines have called for the participation or advice of citizens, but with little guidance with respect to who should be involved or how they should be involved.

The urban renewal programs of the 1950's and early 1960's had relatively weak requirements as far as a citizen involvement component was concerned. Citizen input to the program usually took the form of blue ribbon, community-wide advisory committees. In the early days of the urban renewal programs, citizen participation was viewed as a way to control potential opposition. City-wide advisory committees were established in order to legitimize the city's renewal agency.

In the mid-1960's the Model Cities Program called for "widespread citizen participation," and by 1967 the Department of Housing and Urban Development had issued a set of guidelines for citizen participation in model cities that mandated the provision of significant financial and technical planning resources to citizen groups. Many of the Federal grants-to-local-government programs since that time have required citizen participation in the planning and execution of projects. The following sections highlight the development of the citizen participation components associated with some of the major programs of the 1960's and 1970's.

2. Urban Renewal

Urban renewal was the first major piece of Federal legislation requiring citizen input and was based on the Housing Act of 1954. The 1954 Act established seven guidelines which had to be met as a precondition for receiving Federal funds; one of the guidelines called for a program of citizen participation in the planning and execution of a project. A 1966 HUD publication (HUD, Workable Program for Community Involvement--Answers on Citizen Participation, Program Guide No. 7, February, 1966) states that citizen participation is the keystone of a community's workable program and the means by which citizens:

- inform themselves of their community's activities;
- assist in developing objectives and goals for improvement;
- inventory community resources for accomplishing these objectives;
- learn and pursue the methods and means for achieving the determined goals for improvements; and
- serve as the medium for bringing private resources into the program.

Nevertheless, urban renewal's workable program only implicitly encouraged resident participation as a component of broader, community-wide representative involvement. For the most part, committees formed in accordance with the citizen participation requirement were blue ribbon panels appointed by the mayor or planning staff, and did not include input from residents of project areas.

In 1969 the Department of Housing and Urban Development required more direct citizen input in its Urban Renewal Program by the establishment of Project Area Committees (PAC's). Comprised of residents of contemplated activity areas, the PAC's provided input to decisions about the expenditures of urban renewal funds. Urban renewal remained firmly controlled by elected officials and is a good example of limited resident input and maximum retention by officials of decisionmaking responsibility.

3. The Community Action Program

The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 created the Community Action Program (CAP) to coordinate Federal, state, and local poverty programs. This coordination took place through the offices of over 800 Community Action Agencies (CAA's). The CAA's were established in communities by the local governments in accordance with Federal regulations.

Section 201 of the law states that a community action program must be "developed, conducted, and administered with the maximum feasible participation of residents." This regulation was to become one of the most controversial since the phrase "maximum feasible participation" was not defined further in the bill, nor did the legislative history of the bill provide any guidelines (citizen participation was not discussed during Congressional hearings). Officials who critiqued drafts of the bill neither questioned nor commented on the phrase.

As a result of this lack of definition, the task of issuing regulations concerning participation fell to the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). Initially, OEO chose to leave the matter to local interpretation. OEO advised local community action agencies on a number of ways they could provide for maximum feasible participation:

- the establishment of new, indigenous organizations;
- actual employment of area residents in component projects; and
- resident representation on the governing bodies of CAA's.

The lack of clarity of the meaning of participation resulted in two basic patterns of participation. The first type had a relatively large board (20 members or more) and a relatively small staff of persons employed by the community action agencies (under 20 employees). Emphasis was placed on broad representation of local organizations and interest groups. Responsibilities of the CAA's were limited to planning, coordination, fiscal control, and research. Direct service program operations were delegated to existing organizations.

A second pattern involved a small board (under 20 members) and a relatively large CAA staff (over 20 employees). Board members were either representatives of organizations with direct operational responsibilities in the inner city or representatives of major power interests in the community. Among CAA responsibilities was the direct operation of some programs, and therefore, the employment of operation staff.[12]

In 1966 OEO established a quota requiring that one-third of the CAA board membership consist of target area residents, democratically selected. Those agencies with small boards simply added additional members, and the difference in the size of the boards of the two basic patterns became less pronounced.

However, the urban riots of the following year resulted in Congressional sentiment against citizen "power" in the community action agencies. An amendment to the OEO Act gave local governments the option of becoming the CAA or designating a private body to be recognized. It also reserved one-third of the seats on CAA governing boards for public officials and permitted up to one-third to be assigned to representatives of business, industry, labor, religious, welfare, education, or other major groups of interest in the community. The power structure could thus reassume control of any of the community action agencies that had come under the dominance of the poor and their representatives.

The community action agencies functioning under CAP assumed widely diverse roles in the over 800 communities in which they were established. In some areas the mayor and local officials maintained tight control over their activities. In other localities CAA's were established with a considerable degree of autonomy. Although CAA's differed throughout the country, several generalizations can be made about the citizen participation component:

- Target area residents had little or no part in the initial organization of the CAA's, and thus, little say in determining organizational structure.
- Target area residents had little influence on local CAA major program strategies or the mix of programs.
- Employment of "indigenous nonprofessionals" was not successful as a strategy for providing citizen input because most of the jobs were dead ends.
- Issues raised by CAA's provided the impetus for new indigenous organization in target areas.

More than any other Federal program up to that time, the Community Action Program did have some success in promoting the mobilization of the political power of the poor and the articulation of dissatisfaction at the grass roots level.[13]

4. The Model Cities Program

In 1966 the Model Cities Program was established by the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act. President Johnson asked Congress to approve a Model Cities Program that would "concentrate our available resources--in planning tools, in housing construction, in job training, in health facilities, in recreation, in welfare programs, and in education--to improve the conditions of life in urban areas." One of the 30 requirements contained in the bill for use by HUD in judging applications concerned citizen participation: "The demonstration (agency) should foster...widespread citizen participation--particularly from the demonstration area--in the planning and execution of the program." Unlike the phrase "maximum feasible participation, the choice of the term "widespread participation" was carefully considered and was a direct response to the belief of Johnson and his advisors that too much emphasis had been placed on maximizing the role of the poor and minority ethnic groups in the administration of the Community Action Program.

Two major differences are evident in the approaches taken to citizen participation in the Community Action Program and the approach taken in the Model Cities Program. First, all Federal Model Cities funds were channelled directly to the municipal government and not to local organizations as was required in the OEO program. Local governments, rather than private nonprofit agencies were given ultimate responsibility for the local administration and operation of the program. Second, Model Cities legislation contained no specific requirements concerning either the proportion or manner of selection of citizen representatives. Participation of neighborhood residents was to be limited rather than maximized, and governmental and business participation was to be guaranteed.

As in the case of the CAP, the Department of Housing and Urban Development left the determination of the degree and structure of participation in Model Cities agencies largely to the individual cities. Two broad categories of agency structure emerged--bicameral and unicameral.[14] To a large extent the form and structure of citizen participation a city chose reflected its experience under the Community Action Program. In those cities where the community action agency had a confrontation philosophy, residents participated through an independent organization in developing and reviewing program proposals in more or less equal partnership with public and private agencies. In a city where the poor had been less assertive in the OEO program, the structure became one in which the residents and agency representatives joined in a single planning process. In both cases any plan submitted by the agency and neighborhood residents was subject to approval by the city's governing body.

In 1967 HUD set down new guidelines for participation that, in effect, required a confrontation type, bicameral structure with an independent technical assistance staff for the neighborhood organization. The new guidelines stated that:

> ...the neighborhood citizen participation structure must have clear and direct access to the decisionmaking process of the City Demonstration Agency so that neighborhood views can influence policy, planning, and program decisions...This requirement grows out of the conviction that improving the quality of life of the residents of the model neighborhood can be accomplished only by the affirmative action of the people themselves.[15]

As a result, by 1969 nearly all the unicameral structures had disappeared.

Two general conclusions can be drawn about the impact of citizen participation in the Model Cities Program. First, the emphasis on planning (the first 2 years of a local program was devoted to planning) and the view that planning is the responsibility of professional staff limited citizen participation. Second, the role of the citizens was further limited by legislation which emphasized the importance of local government, tight deadlines on funding and application procedures, and HUD directives (particularly under the Nixon Administration) which defined as legitimate citizen roles advice giving, employment, and at the most, veto power over programs--never control. Naturally, the actual degree of participation varied according to local conditions, and in some cities the Nixon policy toward citizen participation had little effect--a return to some milder form of citizen participation would not be accepted.

5. The National Environmental Policy Act and Environmental Impact Statements

One final piece of legislation of the 1960's which drew the attention of the public was the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. NEPA has as its primary purpose the careful consideration of the environmental impact of the actions taken by all Federal agencies as they engage in their daily processes. Section 102 of the Act required all Federal agencies to prepare detailed statements on the environmental impact of their proposals for legislation or other agency activities, and alternatives to proposed actions. As environmental groups examined this section, they came to realize that it was a potent weapon for halting Federal projects they considered harmful.

The general guidelines for participation contained in the NEPA provide for dissemination of information to the public and for public hearings, meetings, and workshops. A 1972 Government Accounting Office report criticized the Council on Environmental Quality for not moving fast enough in the area of public participation. In response, the Council issued proposed guidelines for impact statements that specify procedures for public input. The regulation requires Federal agencies to circulate a draft of impact statements to other Federal, state, and local agencies and to the public prior to the first point of decisionmaking in the agency review process and at least 15 days before public hearings. Public hearings are mandatory unless it can be demonstrated that public involvement has been achieved through other means. The public must be allowed at least 45 days to reply to the draft statement and time extensions up to 15 days are encouraged. Furthermore, agencies are instructed to disregard the format of public comments and instead concentrate on the substance of the comments. The final impact statement issued by an agency must be responsive to comments received and copies of the final statement and comments must be sent to agencies or individuals who made the comments or requested a copy.

6. General Revenue Sharing

In October, 1972 the State and Local Fiscal Assistance Act was signed into law. The Act (better known as General Revenue Sharing) provided for the disbursement of $30.2 billion in Federal income tax collections to state and local governments over the first five-year period. The purpose of the program is to provide state and local governments with money with which to attack community problems at the local level. Eight priority categories are defined in which revenue sharing monies can be spent for operating and maintenance costs:

- Environmental Protection--e.g., sewage disposal; sanitation and pollution abatement; street cleaning and waste collection; educational programs about topics such as water treatment and soil erosion.
- Financial Administration--e.g., expenses for accounting, auditing, budgeting, investing, tax collection.
- Health--e.g., prevention, diagnosis, evaluation, and treatment of medical and mental health conditions; physical rehabilitation services; educational programs in public health.
- Libraries--e.g., the operation of bookmobiles; purchasing of new books and the upgrading of the general book collection; the development of specialized educational programs for the blind and handicapped.
- Public Safety--e.g., law enforcement; fire protection; building code inspection; civil defense.
- Public Transportation--e.g., highways; transit systems; streets; snow and ice removal.
- Recreation--e.g., participation and spectator sports programs; art, music, and dance exhibitions; arts and crafts activities; museums and zoos; parks and playground activities.
- Social Services for the Poor and Aged--e.g., food, clothing, and shelter; day care; job training.

Furthermore, local governments can spend their allocations on any capital expenditure permissible under state and local law.

The general revenue sharing (GRS) money that local governments receive is new uncommitted money. That is, the money is not already committed to such things as ongoing projects, salaries and pensions, repayment of debts, and paying interest on bonds and notes. Since this money is yet to be allocated to specific projects, the opportunity exists for the involvement of citizens in the local decisionmaking processes about how the money is to be spent. The program was viewed by the Federal government as a way to bring government closer to the people by enabling them to exercise a greater influence in determining local priorities and distributing Federal funds. The Office of Revenue Sharing emphasizes that "individual citizens can now hold their own elected officials directly accountable for the expenditure of revenue sharing funds."

The Office of Revenue Sharing further suggests a number of ways citizens can become involved in making decisions about the expenditure of GRS money: talking with local officials; attending council or commission meetings; serving on community advisory groups; and encouraging community awareness and discussion. At the same time, there are no specific requirements for citizen participation in the allocation and use of general revenue sharing money. Federal legislation and administrative regulations put no pressure on public officials to open government procedures to greater community involvement. Consequently, the goal of active citizen involvement and public accountability has not been reached on any large scale.

7. The Housing and Community Development Act of 1974

The Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 (HCDA) provides for a program of Federal financial assistance designed to improve neighborhood conditions at the local level by providing funds to insure safe housing conditions, a suitable living environment, and expanded economic opportunities. Assistance has been limited to those deteriorating neighborhoods where low and moderate income residents will primarily benefit. Federal guidelines require submission of an annual application for funding which includes a Recommended Community Plan and Program, and Housing Assistance Plan.

In contrast to the State and Local Federal Assistance Act, the HCDA offers some guidelines with respect to citizen participation. The regulations pertaining to citizen participation are found in Section 570.303 and state that prior to submission of its application, the city must certify that it has:

- provided citizens with adequate information concerning the amount of funds available for proposed community development and housing activities, the range of activities that may be undertaken, and other important program requirements;

- held at least two public hearings to obtain the views of citizens on community development and housing needs; and

- provided citizens an adequate opportunity to participate in the development of the application and in the development of any revisions, changes, or amendments.

The Act goes on to point out that the citizen participation requirements don't restrict the responsibility and authority of the applicant (city) for the development of the application and the execution of the community development program. "The sole responsibility and authority to make such final determinations (about the content of the application) rest exclusively with the applicant." Thus, the Act requires citizen involvement in planning, monitoring, and evaluation, but fails to mandate even the broadest type of organizational structure. These decisions remain with the local government.

8. The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Citizen Participation Task Force

Not all efforts to promote increased citizen participation have come in the form of Federal legislation. In 1976 the Secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare appointed a task force on citizen participation.[16] This group was charged with identifying ways to open the Department to a greater degree of effective public interaction and citizen involvement. Through increased citizen participation, HEW hopes to improve the quality of its service to the public.

Upon examination of current HEW processes and procedures, the task force found that Department citizen participation efforts have been informal and sporadic. Further, citizen participation has been an adjunct, rather than an integral part of the Department's decisionmaking.

Based on the following assumptions:

- ...opening Federal administrative processes for citizen access...are legitimate;
- participation, representation, and access to government are goals which should be preserved;
- the Department should continue to seek to stimulate input related to its decisionmaking and operations; and
- HEW personnel should regard citizen participation as an integral part of the Department's decisionmaking process.

The task force proposed two goals:

- The Department will seek to become more sensitive and responsive to citizens; and
- It will actively provide broad opportunities for citizen participation in its processes and procedures before decisions are made and will carefully consider the public's views.

In an attempt to involve citizens at key decision points: 1) forward policy planning; 2) legislation and budget formulation; 3) regulations development; 4) implementation planning; 5) program planning and delivery; 6) evaluation; and 7) auditing, the task force further recommended a number of objectives in support of the overall goals:

- The Department shall encourage and adopt open processes and procedures wherever major policy decisions are being developed, as well as open meetings for public review of plans and programs;

- Regional offices shall seek to involve all segments of the population in the Department's activities, and to develop a variety of opportunities and techniques for ongoing and meaningful exchange with the public; and

- The Department shall pursue every reasonable and practical opportunity to transmit and disseminate pertinent information, in the appropriate language, to the broadest possible audience throughout the country.

While the legislation discussed previously provided examples of Federal agencies mandating citizen participation at the local level, the HEW citizen participation task force is an example of efforts on the part of a large Federal agency to secure more effective citizen involvement in its own policymaking processes. Services are improved by involving the very people who are consumers of the services at key decision points. Implementation of the task force recommendations by HEW promotes a fuller commitment to citizen participation as a continuing activity and facilitates the opportunities for citizens to interact with the Department in its decisionmaking.

Even though the Federal government has taken much of the initiative in stimulating various modes of participation, citizen involvement is not strictly a Federal phenomenon. In the past, citizen participation has been promoted by Federal officials for a variety of reasons: 1) they believed in it from a democratic point of view; 2) ample money was available to enable experimentation with new models; and 3) if conflict should surface, they were far enough removed to escape being hurt politically.[17]

The Federal government can mandate citizen participation at the local level and encourage citizens to become involved in policymaking at the Federal level; the final responsibility for ensuring meaningful and effective participation rests with local public officials and citizens. The Federal government can stimulate participation, but the various actors in the local community must work together to develop the citizen participation processes that work best for them. The Federal government has spent large sums of money in major communities across the country in an attempt to act as a catalyst for citizen participation. Now it is up to the local communities.

E. Facilitating Effective Citizen Participation

Effective citizen participation does not just happen. Consideration must be given to a number of design factors if citizens are to be efficiently and effectively involved in the processes of local government. Attention to the following design factors will not guarantee that public involvement will be successful, but a lack of sensitivity to the need to deal with them will increase the probability of failure.[18]

1. Purpose

One of the most important conditions contributing to the success of citizen participation mechanisms is the degree to which the purpose of the involvement has been clearly defined from the outset. Citizens who participate in a mechanism which has a clearly delineated purpose, scope, and authority are much better able to focus their attention upon realistic problems and objectives.

2. Roles, Responsibilities, and Relationships

In order to avoid confusion and misunderstanding, the roles and responsibilities of the various actors involved (citizens, agency administrators, etc.) should be defined as precisely as possible. The role that citizen groups play can range anywhere along a continuum from review and comment on a specific proposal to making policy decisions and engaging in program implementation and administration. Further, these efforts can have their primary emphasis on very specific issues or they can be directed at activities at a higher level--overall city planning or the budget allocation process. Similarly, care should be taken to define the relationships of the participants in the group as well as the relationship of the group or groups to the government representatives.

3. Style of Operation

An effort must be made to insure that the public involvement opportunities which are made available offer citizens an exciting role and a meaningful relationship with city officials. An important consideration to keep in mind is the potential difference in the incentives and motivation of the citizens as compared to the decisionmakers. Citizens are likely to be more interested in problems and their solutions as applied to their own neighborhood, and hence, tend to be motivated toward more immediate action. Government administrators, on the other hand, are generally more interested in longer range policies. Therefore, officials should use immediate and intermediate action to solve high priority problems of the citizens and to foster an interest in long term planning.

4. Membership

Membership in citizen participation groups should reflect the constituency for whom the group speaks--the community as a whole, a specific geographic locality, or a client of individuals with particular characteristics or needs. The size of the group is a key factor to its success; the group must be large enough to be balanced, but not so large as to be unwieldy. The membership should include the broadest range of constituent viewpoints and allow for the development of a sophisticated and knowledgeable group.

5. Communication

It is imperative that good communications linkages be developed between the public involvement groups and city officials. If these linkages do not exist, each is operating in a vacuum with respect to each other. Communication channels can take the form of public hearings, town meetings, media coverage, agendas and newsletters of public involvement groups or decisionmakers, press conferences, presentations to groups, etc. In order for communication to be maximally effective, all participants--citizens and officials--must be sensitive to the needs and limitations of each other. Along with the sensitivity to needs is the need to be aware of and respect the values of the other actors. All participants do not have to share the same values, but they do need to agree to the right of different people to have different sets of values.

6. Training

For citizen participation to be helpful to city officials, sufficient training opportunities must be provided to citizens who engage in the various participatory mechanisms so that they can perform their roles and carry out their responsibilities with a reasonable amount of skill. A number of topics could be covered in citizen training sessions. For example: 1) group process skills; 2) information about the domain in which they are to work--facts about community resources and problems, the roles and responsibilities of various city departments, divisions, and officials, and legislation that is of interest to the public involvement group; 3) problem solving techniques; 4) budgetary and accounting procedures; and 5) comprehensive planning and evaluation techniques.

7. Technical Assistance

It should not be expected that the members of citizen participation groups will possess or acquire all the skills necessary to participate in the planning and decisionmaking process at the highest level of efficiency and effectiveness. Consequently, citizen involvement groups must have access to those individuals that possess the appropriate skills and information required to carry out the roles and responsibilities of the group. By providing staff to groups on a continuing basis, the group will have the information it needs to make sound decisions and recommendations.

8. Tangible Improvements

Ultimate success of citizen participation programs depends on the benefits that the citizens see as a result of their input. The products and outcomes of the participation effort should be related back to citizen priorities in order to demonstrate that their participation was "meaningful." When decisions are made that do not reflect the priorities of the citizens, explanations about the lack of congruency should be provided to the citizens. Appropriate timing of projects is also essential. Delays which may obstruct products must be limited if the level of citizen involvement is to be maintained or raised.

9. Self-Evaluation

Citizen participation groups should develop objectives and periodically and systematically evaluate progress toward those objectives. Obstacles should be identified and dealt with and the appropriate change made in order to enhance efficient and effective operation.

Participation requires people and the success of any attempt at citizen involvement is dependent upon human capacity. It does not make much difference whether the particular participatory mechanism is one that was designed and established by government or is one that resulted from the initiative of a group of citizens. In the final analysis, the capacities of individual participants and the properties of groups are what make the difference.

10. Form and Function

The factors discussed previously in this section along with such things as the need for specialized hardware or personnel, the political climate, cost, and the type and complexity of the issue must all be taken into consideration when developing a participation strategy. Perhaps one of the most important design elements to be considered when developing a citizen participation strategy is the relationship of form to function. That is, the particular participation mechanism(s) used must be chosen so as to ensure the greatest likelihood that predetermined functions and purposes will be served.

More and more legislation is found to contain mandates that include citizen participation programs as a requirement for entitlement. On the other hand, few guidelines are provided in the legislation that assist local governments in determining just what form of citizen participation is most appropriate. The cities are told to do it, but are not told how to do it or what form of participation to use.

When citizen participation was used mainly as a procedure to review decisions that, for all intents and purposes, had already been made, public hearings and briefings, etc., were sufficient mechanisms for citizen involvement in the decisionmaking process. With the increasing emphasis on the information, accessibility, involvement, and accountability missions of government, the particular uses of citizen participation have been expanded to include a wide variety of purposes--e.g., assist in defining and prioritizing citizen needs, goals, and objectives, generate support for programs and policies, collect and disseminate information, generate feedback and review concerning policies and programs, etc.

In order to select the most appropriate mechanism it is important to specify at the beginning what broad function(s) (e.g., information) and what specific purpose(s) (e.g., collect information) is being served. Further, one must remember that the purpose can be dependent upon the perspective of the particular participant. For example, a city department may want to use citizen participation to facilitate communication with the public. The purpose in the minds of department officials is to disseminate information. Consequently, a series of public meetings and presentations to groups are arranged.

These are good mechanisms for disseminating information but are likely to cause problems if the public views this attempt to promote better communication as an interactive process. The original intent of the city department may have been to disseminate information in order to generate support for department policies and programs, but the citizens may view this as an opportunity to suggest and promote alternative policies and programs. To the degree that department personnel are amenable to the inclusion of citizen input into the decisionmaking process, a participation mechanism that would allow for better interaction and the exchange of information and ideas would be more productive. In this case a workshop, ad hoc committee, or advisory group would serve the purpose.

An ad hoc committee, for example, may in turn employ other citizen participation mechanisms as they proceed to carry out their mission. A citizen survey based on a random sample of individual citizens would permit projection of the results to the entire population. With the survey the committee could gather information about potential target groups, identify needs and priorities, evaluate existing policies and programs, and in the process serve an educative function with respect to the services available from the department. One mechanism has then been used for multiple purposes and the process as a whole has served all four of the broad functions of citizen participation.

Thus, a number of key points should be kept in mind:

- A given citizen participation mechanism may be able to serve more than one function or purpose.
- Multiple functions or purposes may be served simultaneously by one or more mechanisms.
- The function or purpose of a particular mechanism in a situation can vary depending upon the intentions and perspective of the participant.
- The correct sequence of events when selecting a citizen participation mechanism is to: 1) determine the function

and purpose of the citizen involvement; 2) consider other constraints--e.g., staff availability, cost, time, political climate; 3) choose the citizen participation mechanism that will serve the purpose given other operating constraints.

Paying attention to the various design factors discussed in this section will help in developing an effective participation strategy. While all of the factors are important, in the end, there is no substitute for good people who have a sincere desire to make citizen participation work.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Although citizen participation has a role in program and resource management, this definition relates citizen participation most directly to policy management. For a discussion of policy, program, and resource management as they relate to the overall concept of public management, see Philip M. Burgess, "Capacity Building and the Elements of Public Management," in Public Administration Review, December, 1975, 35, Special Issue, pp. 705-716.

[2] Sidney Verba, "Democratic Participation," in The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, September, 1967, 373, p. 53-78.

[3] Sherry Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," in Journal of the American Institute of Planners, 35, p. 216.

[4] Charles Bens, Citizen Participation in Metro Toronto (Toronto: Bureau of Municipal Research, 1974).

[5] Citizen Involvement Network (New York: Citizen Involvement Network, n.d.), p. 7.

[6] Roberto Rabago, Approaches to Citizen Involvement in the Local Government Decision-Making Process (Sacramento: California State Economic Opportunity Office, 1976).

[7] Desmond Connor, Citizens Participate: An Action Guide for Public Issues (Oakville, Ontario: Development Press, 1974).

[8] Leon Kumove, Constructive Citizen Participation (Oakville, Ontario: Development Press, 1975).

[9] Citizen Involvement Network, p. 5.

[10] IBID, p. 7.

[11] For a further discussion of recent trends of political alienation, see Arthur H. Miller, "Public Policy and Political Cynicism: 1964-1970," in Norman R. Luttbeg (ed.), Public Opinion and Public Policy (Homewood, Illinois: Dorsey Press, 1974), pp. 453-477.

[12] Brandeis University Study, "Community Representation in 20 Cities," in Edgar S. Cohn and Barry A. Passett (eds.), Citizen Participation: Effecting Community Change (New York: Praeger, 1971), p. 205.

[13] See Edgar S. Cohn and Barry A. Passett, passim, and David Austin, "Resident Participation: Political Mobilization or Organizational Cooptation?" in Public Administration Review, September, 1972, 32, Special Issue.

[14] James Sundquist and David Davis, Making Federalism Work (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1969).

[15] Department of Housing and Urban Development, Community Development Act Letter No. 3, October 30, 1967.

[16] Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, "Citizen Participation: Request for Public Comment," in Federal Register, November 10, 1976, 41:218, pp. 49772-49781.

[17] George Washnis, "Community Involvement: Why?" in Public Management, December, 1975, 57:12, p. 6.

[18] William R. Dodge, Jr., "Public Involvement in Local Government in the 1970's," in Management Information Service Report, January, 1974, 6:1, pp. 9-12.

COMMUNICATING WITH CITIZENS

The overall goal of this module is to familiarize the reader with the importance of effective communication in citizen participation and with some of the major problems affecting communication. After reading this module, the reader should be more aware of and be able to specify:

- types of one-way and two-way techniques that could be used in communication and the advantages and disadvantages of each;
- why establishing local government credibility is important in communication;
- how credibility could be promoted;
- major differences in the role perspectives of citizens and officials and negative views that often accompany those perspectives; and
- what might be done to overcome differences in role perspectives.

COMMUNICATING WITH CITIZENS

A. Communications: Its Role in Citizen Participation

Many citizen participation efforts have been hurt because citizens and local officials could not communicate effectively. The Overview Module began with a case study concerning citizen participation in the capital improvements planning process. This was a political situation with the potential for conflict built into it. This conflict concerned the distribution of scarce resources; that is, not enough money was available to fund all the capital improvements that were needed. Citizen participation mechanisms and communication alone will not eliminate the necessity to make hard political decisions. However, better communication can help to eliminate misunderstandings that could unnecessarily add to this conflict.

For example, in the capital improvements case study, citizens were not given enough time to prepare their requests or enough information concerning legal constraints on spending money. Thus, when they asked for their sewer system to be separated, they were told that the money available could not be spent for this kind of project. Citizens felt that governmental officials were "playing games with them" and that for anything they proposed, officials would find some reason why it could not be funded. Thus, the lack of adequate information and effective communication aggravated an already difficult situation and greatly increased the level of conflict.

Communication is an important part of any citizen participation effort. When citizens become involved in the operation of government and express their desires, opinions, satisfactions, and dissatisfactions, they are communicating with public officials. When public officials provide citizens with information concerning governmental activities or when public officials design programs or initiatives on the basis of citizens' expressed needs, they are communicating with citizens. Thus, a communication system involves both citizens and public officials.

The previous module mentioned that there are four major functions of citizen participation; that is, the information, accessibility, involvement, and accountability functions.

Communication is related in some way to each of these functions. It is directly related to the information function which involves both the collection of information from citizens and the dissemination of information to citizens. Accessibility involves the opening of channels to and the facilitating of contact with public officials in order that citizens can communicate their opinions and complaints. One of the reasons citizens become involved is to express their opinions and develop a feeling that their ideas are valued and that they can have an impact. Accountability involves governmental officials being answerable for their actions and justifying why they have pursued a certain course of action. Consequently, communication is involved in some way with all the functions of citizen participation.

Thus, in many ways the development of an adequate citizen participation strategy is closely related to the development of a communication system; that is, the process by which citizens and governmental officials exchange information. This is not to suggest, however, that communication is synonymous with citizen participation. Citizen participation is first and foremost a political process. Conflict occurs among competing interests regardless of how well these interests can communicate with each other. However, this conflict can be aggravated by misperceptions and misinformation. Communication occurs within an overall citizen participation structure--such as a neighborhood commission, or a complaint bureau, or a public hearing or survey. Because of the importance of effective communication, this module examines some of the problems that have occurred in establishing effective communication. This examination should sensitize the reader to these problems and should offer some suggestions concerning how officials might improve the quality of communication within their locality.

Perfect and complete communication will never occur. However, by consciously addressing the problems of communication, government officials can improve their ability to communicate with citizens.

Major issues involved in communication between public officials and citizens are:

- the use of appropriate communication techniques;
- the establishment of local governmental credibility; and
- differences in role perspective.

The first issue--that is, appropriate communication techniques--deals with factors affecting how information is exchanged. The second and third issues--that is, credibility and differences in role perspective--deal with factors affecting how officials and citizens interpret the information that is exchanged.

B. Communication Techniques

1. Introduction

This section describes a variety of communication techniques that could be used in promoting better communication between government and citizens. The purpose of this discussion is to familiarize the reader with the range of techniques available and to stimulate the reader to begin to think analytically about the communications process.

Public officials give information to citizens and receive information from citizens. Thus, the public official is both a sender and receiver of information. Within the context of citizen participation, public officials are communicating the following types of information to citizens:

- governmental officials' desire for citizen participation--that is, they are communicating that they really want citizens to participate;
- governmental motives for citizen participation--that is, they are communicating why they want citizens to participate and how the results of this involvement will be used; and
- information citizens need to participate effectively--that is, they are communicating the details of proposed plans or background information about a particular topic area.

With the context of citizen participation, public officials receive the following types of information from citizens:

- citizen reactions to a proposed governmental course of action;
- citizens' suggestions concerning what types of projects need to be initiated; and
- citizen reactions to the whole process of participation.

Thus, establishing communication could involve a range of activities. For example, the urban manager must consider and include a variety of one-way techniques that serve to transfer information on a continuing basis. In addition, within the range of communication techniques to be used to strengthen citizen participation, techniques or mechanisms need to be used that will elicit or receive information from citizens. It should be remembered that communication must complement action to maintain credibility and that citizens will be both senders and receivers of messages.

There are basically two major types of communications techniques: one-way media and two-way media. Common types of one-way media are written materials (direct mailings, newsletters, newspapers), speeches, and demonstrations. These types of media are good for sending messages but do not allow the person who receives the information to make a response. Common types of two-way media are one-to-one discussions (interviews, telephone calls) or small group discussions. These types of media are good not only for sending messages, but also for receiving them.

The next few sections of this module discuss different types of one-way and two-way media and outline the relative advantages and disadvantages of each.

2. One-Way Communications Techniques

One-way communication techniques can generally be used to raise the awareness of listeners or receivers about a topic or event and to transfer basic factual information from one person to another. Types of one-way media are written, oral, and visual.

a. Written. Common types of written materials are:

- News Releases--These are "news" stories which are prepared by a writer who is "in-house" and not from the media. The news release is submitted by an institution or organization to a newspaper with a "to be released" date, a contact name, and a telephone number. The media regard news releases with some skepticism because press agents and public affairs people tend to be poor judges of what is of news value. Thus, care should be used in selecting news releases because far more are submitted than are ever published. A typical news release might be prepared for the opening of a new mini-city hall or the election of a new neighborhood council member or leader, or to publicize a new program being initiated by the city.

- Newspaper Columns--Arrangements might be made with a local newspaper to maintain a continuing column concerning the city's citizen participation efforts. This column could be used to publicize the activities of a particular mechanism--such as a column by the ombudsman describing activities of the office or by the neighborhood manager of a mini-city hall--or to provide information about different programs for which officials are seeking citizen reactions.

- Feature Articles or Stories--The feature article generally has less of a time urgency than a news release and can justify more column space if it is well done. A "feature" is ordinarily completed by a media reporter who is assigned to the story by an editor or news director.

- Annual Reports--This once a year report technique is used by organizations large and small in both public and private sectors. A good annual report will include "vital" information such as names, addresses, office phone numbers, job titles, major line and staff functions, and what was achieved by whom during the past year. Current and future plans are usually included in a good report--although the past year is the theme of the report. Circulation of the annual report should include major institutions and neighborhood groups. Extra copies should be placed in high traffic public buildings and also sent to all media.

- Special Reports--This report is used for in-depth treatment of a problem, need, or a successful project. It should provide antecedent data and information, current status, and requirements for the future (if any). Circulation should be to all media, legislative officials (if relevant), public organizations, and "concerned" or specialized citizen groups. This report would be an in-depth analysis and it is very important that information be accurately reported.

- Briefing Bulletins--This technique is used to provide major points or facts about a situation which is unfolding. The briefing bulletin can be updated as events unfold. The bulletin helps to demonstrate that local government is "on top" of a problem, monitoring it closely, and reporting all that is known when it is known. The bulletin can be distributed to newsmen, to neighborhoods, and individuals. The briefing bulletin has the effect of controlling rumor and legitimizing the source as credible. The source or producer of a briefing bulletin must be certain of the facts reported, or the bulletin technique can destroy credibility.

- Newsletters--Newsletters range from a primitive single sheet to an elaborate newspaper-like format. A local government newsletter should contain stories and news which inform readers in and outside of government about projects, programs, activities, policies, and decisions--particularly when change is involved. Typically, a newsletter would be issued by a continuing citizen participation mechanism, such as a neighborhood commission. Schedules of major hearings, council meetings, news reports, and so forth should be included. News about citizen participation (activities, people, places, projects, problems, successes), should be included. Newsletters should have a wide circulation inside and outside of local government.

- Official Notices or Invitations--Items which are printed and mailed for special purposes tend to elicit interest and attention from the receiver. "Official" notices might be sent to special or significant citizen leaders about an important upcoming meeting.
- City Government Directories--A directory of governmental service units, individual's names who are in charge, their office numbers, addresses, and telephone numbers should be compiled. Neighborhood offices and mini-city halls should also be included. The directory should serve as a guide to citizens for locating departments and people who can help. Circulation should be wide but selected.

If well written and conceived, written materials have the following advantages:

- They can potentially reach a large number of people;
- They are reasonably simple to plan and carry out; and
- They are usually inexpensive--except in the case of publishing directories or newsletters.

However, written materials also have a number of inherent disadvantages:

- People do not always read the information they receive;
- Certain types of people--such as those people who are already interested or who have high educational status--are more likely to read the materials than others;
- They tend to be impersonal;
- There is usually no feedback to indicate whether the information was read, by whom, and with what effect; and
- They are primarily useful for disseminating information rather than receiving it.

Consequently, while written materials are an effective means of creating awareness, they have limitations which caution against exclusive reliance.

b. Oral and Visual. Common types of oral and visual one-way media are:

- Presentations or Speeches--Officials could talk to a group about a specific program or activity in which government is engaged. Thus, the official could stimulate greater awareness and interest. While the official can answer questions from the audience concerning a certain program, this is still primarily a one-way technique because the primary purpose is to transmit information rather than to receive it.

- Radio and Television--Announcements, news releases, and features can be submitted to radio and television. In addition, officials can appear on special public affairs broadcasting programs on local stations.

- Exhibits--If well designed, exhibits can transform mundane information into interesting, informative, "experiences" for the viewer/listener. For example, actual containers might be used to illustrate how much water a penny will buy in the city. The colorful and imaginative use of charts, photographs, maps, and three-dimensional models can help to educate and inform citizens and public officials of trends and conditions related to a complex and important issue. The effectiveness of special exhibits can be very high if: 1) the message/purpose is well-prepared; and 2) if the display is placed in high traffic, public areas.

Presentations or speeches can be a useful way to transfer information. They are a more personal form of communication than written material and allows the speaker to adjust to a particular audience and to clarify any ambiguities that might arise. However, the number of people who can be reached through this technique is generally limited.

The great advantage of television over the print media is realism. Through television, a large audience can receive vivid and accurate information. However, it usually does not provide any feedback on whether the viewer has understood the message (with the exception of television talk shows that allow viewers to call in) or offer any control over who watches the program. If located in a place where there is a lot of traffic, special exhibits can also reach a large number of people. However, there is usually no feedback.

3. Two-Way Communication Techniques

A two-way information technique means that an individual can not only listen, but also speak. The simplest two-way technique is one-to-one interaction. In this situation, two people can thoroughly outline their different viewpoints and arrive at some understanding. They can observe the other person and make a preliminary determination of motives (e.g., is this official really interested in what I have to say). In addition, the two people can relate to each other as people rather than roles. In other words, rather than being a "public official" and a "citizen," it is "Mary Caldwell" and "Joe Dunlop." One-to-one interaction can be an effective communication technique. However, it is limited because only one citizen can participate at any one time.

As more people are added, the situation becomes more complex. There is still opportunity for interaction, although because there are more people involved, it is generally less intense. Generally, there can be effective two-way interaction in groups of up to fifteen people. After that, the number of people involved severely restricts the opportunity for each one to participate.

With the exception of surveys, all of the citizen participation mechanisms discussed in the next module promote two-way interaction. These participation mechanisms are more than simply communication devices. However, they provide an overall structure within which two-way interaction can occur. The next few sections discuss the advantages and disadvantages of these mechanisms as they relate to promoting communication. For communication purposes the mechanisms can be divided into informal, temporary and formal, permanent two-way communication techniques.

For example, types of informal, temporary, two-way communication techniques include the following:

- Public Hearings;
- Public Briefings;
- Task Forces; and
- Blue Ribbon Committees.

These techniques are all temporary in that they will be disbanded after accomplishing a certain purpose. They can be used to help disseminate information to citizens as well as to learn and collect information from them. In addition to information transfer, these techniques are particularly useful for stimulating discussions to help define problems and develop solutions--such as reviewing a plan or developing priorities for a proposal. Hence, these techniques can be effective for strengthening the information function of any citizen participation effort because they can simultaneously be used to disseminate and collect information.

Principal advantages of these techniques include the following:

- They are relatively easy and inexpensive to implement and operate;
- They promote two-way communication between citizens and local government officials which should yield improved understanding of individual participants and the issues being discussed;
- They rely upon a talent pool--e.g., individuals with different perspectives and expertise--to address certain problems and issues;
- They can be used for varying lengths of time--that is, the life of any one of the techniques may be very brief or extended to a semi-permanent status;
- They may be implemented in a variety of locations and therefore, allow great flexibility in use--for example, public hearings may be held at city hall or a series of hearings may be held in a number of neighborhoods;
- They rely upon a limited amount of structure and procedure so that inexperienced participants can learn and participate very quickly;
- Although they primarily rely upon oral communication, written documents may also be used to brief, report, and query participants in order to make interaction more meaningful and promote better use of time; and
- They tend to promote "stockholding" by participants in the problem-solving or issue-resolution process--thus, beyond stimulating interest, these mechanisms promote personal interaction and information exchange--which could lead to action.

Some of the major disadvantages associated with the five informal, temporary, two-way communication techniques are the following:

- Each technique must be well planned to be effective;
- Since these techniques rely on face-to-face interaction, they tend to be biased toward people who are articulate and have the time to attend meetings; and
- The number of people who can participate at any one time is limited--generally the more individuals, the less time there is for interaction.

While these techniques tend to be initiated and staffed by local government, their major purpose is to utilize the strength, knowledge, and experience of a diverse group of citizens in partnership with local government.

Government's role is to organize and facilitate the process, not to control the substance of citizen suggestions.

Types of formal, permanent, two-way communication techniques include the following:

- neighborhood commissions;
- neighborhood priority boards;
- functional groups such as civilian review boards, planning or development commissions, and license appeals boards;
- ombudsmen and complaint bureaus; and
- mini-city halls.

These techniques or mechanisms are permanent because they perform continuing functions. As was true of the previous group of techniques, these mechanisms can be used to receive and disseminate information. They represent formally organized communication systems which contain some capacity for affecting policy formulation.

Principal advantages of these techniques include the following:

- As formalized and permanent techniques, they are a visible sign of governmental interest in establishing two-way communication;
- Several of the techniques (communication relations committees and civilian review boards) can be mobilized rapidly to deal with crises or to work to relieve tensions during periods where relationships in the community are polarized and strained;
- As communication techniques, they promote the free flow of information to and from government and citizens. They can be viewed as fixed communication channels which have a capacity to disseminate and collect information.

Some of the major disadvantages of these techniques are:

- Cost: Because these are permanent structures, people and facilities are required on a permanent basis. Thus, a mini-city hall, for example, will require a location which is accessible, and a staff to manage and operate it.
- Complexity: The reference here is to organization complexity--e.g., managing people, resources--to meet the mission or designated purpose of the technique. Another aspect of the complexity issue is that of clarifying the role of citizens in the mechanism. The same issue applies to the relationships with local government. In other words,

policy and administrative issues must be clarified so that government and citizens understand how a particular technique is to be organized and used.

A final type of two-way communication technique is cable television. Cable television may be the most important communication innovation in years. It was developed in the early 1950's to bring television to viewers who lived in poor broadcast reception areas of the country.

Cable television systems can transmit up to 40 channels, as contrasted to the 12 used by over-the-air broadcasting. Cable television is supported by subscribers who pay from $5-8 per set so that cable operators do not have to depend on selling advertising.

The advantages of cable television are enormous. Cable can:

- Provide local news and information about what's going on in the town, the community, the neighborhood--even the block;
- Make it possible for communication organizations to conduct meetings in which cable viewers participate via the home screen. A cable system may be subdivided into smaller units such as political wards, school districts, or ethnic community areas. It is possible for cable systems to permit two-way communication, letting an individual at home express opinions on community issues by means of a signalling device on the television set. Ultimately, there will be provisions for talk-back;
- Make it possible for you to "sit in" regularly on public meetings such as the town council or the board of education;
- Make it possible for the board of education to distribute televised adult education courses into the home, or to teach children at home if they are physically unable to go to school. Community colleges can offer course work, too;
- Make it possible , at very low cost, for candidates for elected office at various levels of government to speak their minds on whatever they think important.[1]

One of the primary advantages of cable is that the needs and interests of many people can be served by a cable broadcast at modest cost. Cable television is a resource which can be used to facilitate interaction on a scale not available through any other medium. As in the case of all the techniques discussed, cable television must be considered as part of a total communications program--which leads to the final topic of this section.

4. Eliciting Citizen Feedback

The previous sections outlined a variety of one-way and two-way communications techniques that could be used by public officials. The purpose of this discussion was to familiarize the reader with the range of techniques available and to stimulate the reader to begin to think analytically about the communications process. It was noted that public officials both disseminate information to and collect information from citizens.

From a citizen participation perspective, the most important aspect of this process is collecting information from citizens; that is, eliciting citizen feedback. The next module, dealing with citizen participation mechanisms, examines in detail the capacity of various mechanisms to collect information. However, a common technique used in most of these mechanisms is to gather citizen feedback in some type of face-to-face situation--either through one-to-one interaction (such as a complaint bureau) or within a group setting (such as a task force or public hearing). Thus, this section examines considerations involved in eliciting citizen feedback in some type of face-to-face situation.

Borman offers the following eight suggestions that could be followed to encourage adequate feedback.[2]

- Tell people you want feedback--People must be encouraged repeatedly to provide responses, to speak up, to raise questions. Hence, officials must be sincerely interested in citizen feedback and must communicate this sincerity to citizens. For example, if citizens perceive that officials are only interested in feedback in order to meet Federal guidelines, this may result in low levels of participation and hostile reactions.

- Identify the areas in which you want feedback--Without some type of specification, the feedback may have limited usefulness and become so time-consuming that the information cannot be used. The criterion for specifying the type of feedback required is simply what needs to be known to deal with the problem or issue at hand. The need to specifically outline for citizens the purpose for their participation is a design point that is often mentioned in the Mechanisms Module.

- Set aside time for regularly scheduled feedback sessions--The analogy here is that disease treatment is far more costly than disease prevention. Therefore, efforts should be consciously planned to acquire the necessary feedback to modify behavior or policies, and to plan future actions or communications.

- Use silence to encourage feedback--One way to stimulate feedback is to plan for feedback sessions or to use feedback mechanisms. However, the official who seeks feedback must be willing to allow people to speak, write, or otherwise provide it. The official who dominates the feedback sessions or mechanism will crowd out feedback opportunities.

- Watch and be aware of non-verbal messages--The sincerity of public officials will be judged not only by words, but also by actions. Thus, if officials say they are interested in obtaining feedback from citizens on a proposed development plan, and then hand the citizen a bound document with glossy photographs, this may indicate to citizens that officials are confident that the plan will be implemented. It is a non-verbal sign that officials are really not interested in obtaining feedback.

- Ask questions--Genuine feedback will contain criticism. If it doesn't, it isn't. However, the official should elicit from the citizen more than just criticism. He should determine the cause of the problem, when and where the problem exists, and what some possible solutions to it might be--all from the citizen's perspective. The official could use phrases such as "what is your opinion?", or "what would you do about the problem to solve it?" Skillfully handled, feedback can be highly informative and helpful to both the official and the citizen. It will help both parties in planning and anticipating future events, problems, and actions.

- Use statements that encourage feedback--Officials should stimulate the citizen to elaborate on his comments. One suggested way to do this is to repeat the provider's statement; or, to paraphrase the statement and ask if that is what was meant.

- Reward feedback--Those who respond to the request for feedback should be given recognition and, if possible, some incentive. The point is that feedback situations allow people to view each other's roles more closely and to understand a different point of view. Both parties to the feedback situation can become more effective participants in the communication process and go beyond simply playing roles of communicator and receiver. Hence, their roles become more similar in that both seek understanding vis-a-vis the message and the content or problem related to it.

This section of "feedback" has attempted to say several things. First, to have a reliable and effective communication system whether internal to the organization or extending from the organization to the community, attention and time must be devoted to obtaining feedback on a regular basis. It was also noted that managing feedback is not without its costs. It can be troublesome, time consuming, and upsetting.

The section contains a set of eight guidelines for eliciting and managing feedback. Perhaps the biggest error one can make is to express a desire for feedback and then not act on it. This choice can seriously undermine the credibility of the communicator to such an extent that it cannot be restored.

The maintenance of credibility is critical to the success of communication in particular and of citizen participation in general. The next section examines the issue of credibility and offers some suggestions concerning how credibility might be nurtured and maintained.

C. Local Government Credibility

1. Introduction

Local government credibility is absolutely vital if citizen participation and involvement is to be useful and meaningful in planning, policy development, and decisionmaking. Within the context of citizen participation, the credibility of officials is important because it affects how the information exchanged between officials and citizens is interpreted. The citizen usually has to rely upon the local officials for facts. In addition, if the citizen feels the government is withholding information or providing inaccurate information, the citizen will either decide that participation is fruitless or that it is necessary to go "public" in order to get action. However, if government is sincere in obtaining citizen participation, then officials need to concentrate on building credible relationships with citizens in order to avoid unnecessary political problems and to stimulate active involvement. In the sections that follow, the concept of credibility is examined in order to get a better idea of how it might be promoted. Then suggestions will be offered concerning how local governments might establish and maintain credibility with the citizenry.

2. The Concept of Credibility

This section discusses research findings which can assist in formulating some concrete recommendations for strengthening the credibility of local government. Again, it should be noted that communication must be accompanied by performance and action. Hence, the recommendations presented here assume that genuine interest and performance would complement any and all communication program planning and implementation.

The Yale Communication Research Program[3] conducted important studies during the 1950's related to many factors of communication effectiveness, including credibility. Based on this and research which followed, it is known that credibility is important because it affects how a receiver of information interprets content.

Generally, researchers have found that credibility of the source is dependent upon the perception of expertness and trustworthiness. The Yale research group distinguished between expertness and trustworthiness:

- Expertness is the extent to which a person is perceived to be a source of valid information.
- Trustworthiness is the degree of confidence in the person's intent to communicate the information he considers to be most valid.

Simply stated, credibility is composed of two dimensions--expertness and trustworthiness. A source is, therefore, perceived as credible if he not only possesses valid information, but also will share or communicate that which is the most valid.

Thus, if an urban manager is regarded or perceived as being a "repository" of valid information (expertness) but will not share that which is valid (trustworthiness), his credibility will be lowered as will the credibility of the department or institution he represents.

What this means in practical communication terms is that credibility is a changeable element and just, therefore, be nurtured by:

- sound information gathering techniques and systems, including communication feedback systems;
- a decision and processing capability to separate what is valid information from that which is not; and
- an information dissemination capability which is steadily maintained, but which can also be accessed by people who need information.

At the personal level there are factors related to "expertness" and "trustworthiness" that should be noted in this discussion of credibility.

Research has shown that "expertness" or the feeling that a person possesses valid information is a function of the age of the communicator and the person's recognized position of leadership.

Thus, officials should consider these factors in choosing people from government to work with citizens and citizen groups. For example, one city hired a number of young planners and assigned each of them to provide technical assistance concerning community development planning to a variety of neighborhood commissions in the city. Almost all of these planners encountered intense hostility from the citizen groups. They were viewed as being too young and inexperienced. Rather than viewing these planners as evidence that the city was sincerely interested in the views of these bodies, the citizen leaders complained that the assignment of these people indicated that the city really was not interested in eliciting neighborhood input. The citizen leaders felt that if city officials were interested, experienced personnel would have been given to the commission. The point of this example is not that cities should avoid hiring young planners. Rather, if young planners are used who do not occupy major decisionmaking positions, these people need to consciously go about establishing credibility.

Usually, however, city officials do not have problems establishing "expertness." Generally, citizen groups believe that the city has valid information. The problem often is--from the perspective of the citizen--that the official does not want to share that information. This relates to the other dimension of credibility; that is, trustworthiness.

Trustworthiness refers to the degree of confidence in the person's intent to communicate the information he considers to be most valid. Thus, while public officials may have valid information, if the citizen perceives that the official is unwilling to share this information, the official will lose credibility.

The major concern of the citizen with regard to trustworthiness deals with the motives of the public officials. If citizens feel that they are being manipulated--by being given either incomplete or misleading information in order to make them arrive at a certain conclusion--then officials will tend to be viewed as not trustworthy.

The theory behind establishing trustworthiness is relatively simple; that is, actions should correspond with words, and citizens should be given the information they need in order to participate effectively. If local governmental officials say they want citizen input, then their actions should be consistent with this request. For example, one city held public hearings to review a plan for spending community development monies. However, the only publicity given to this hearing was a small formal notice in the local paper and the meeting was held on the evening before Thanksgiving. The actions of officials did not indicate that they were really interested in obtaining citizen participation.

However, the situation of most concern is when officials are sincerely interested in obtaining citizen feedback, but are not able to communicate this sincerity to citizens. That is, for one reason or another, citizens do not view the officials as being trustworthy. There could be a variety of reasons for these negative perceptions--some of them unrelated to anything the official did or said. For example, one city has had a long history of token participation. A decision was made by the chief executive officer of the city to increase citizen involvement and to use citizen feedback to guide and evaluate governmental programs. However, because of a bad history, citizens did not believe the city was sincere about promoting increased involvement. In this type of situation, officials will probably have to withstand a good deal of hostility before they are able to re-establish credibility. Officials have to have a period of time in which they said they were interested and they acted like they were interested.

In addition, some citizens may always question the motives of governmental officials regardless of what they do. There is little that can be done about this. However, if government tries to stimulate the active participation of a number of citizens on a continual basis, these types of problems should be relatively minor. This problem will be examined more closely in the next section on role perspectives.

However, it could be that inaccurate perceptions of official insincerity are due to bad communication. That is, officials inadvertently do not anticipate what information citizens need in order to participate effectively or they do not accurately judge how their actions are viewed by citizens. This was the case in the capital improvements scenario presented at the beginning of the Overview Module. Officials did not provide enough information concerning the constraints on spending capital improvements money. Thus, because the citizens found out about these constraints after they had made their request, they regarded these legitimate constraints as an official excuse for not funding projects for the inner city.

Establishing credibility is an issue that deserves the explicit attention of governmental officials. Credibility is easy to lose, but very difficult and time consuming to create. In order to promote credibility, officials need to act the way they say they are going to act, to provide citizens with accurate information, and to consider how official actions are perceived by citizens. The last prescription is sometimes difficult to follow. Public officials and citizens occupy different roles in the citizen participation process, and consequently have different perspectives. This difference in perspective can sometimes be a barrier--not only to the establishment of credibility, but also to effective communication. In addition, they may also hold negative images of one another that make it difficult to interact and may cause mutual distrust. This subject is briefly examined in the next section.

D. Role Perspectives

There are two major issues related to role perspectives that could make communication difficult. First of all, the different roles occupied by the public official and citizen may cause them to have different perspectives. Second, these different perspectives may tend to cause public officials and citizens to have negative views of each other. The purpose of this section is to sensitize the reader to these issues by identifying major differences between the roles of officials and citizens and by describing negative views that may be held by each major actor.

The role or perspective of the city official is characterized by the following major dimensions:

- They tend to be concerned with a number of issues and with the interests of a number of different people;
- They tend to be aware that the city has a limited amount of money and that if one project or service is increased, it usually means another service remains the same, or is decreased, or is not initiated;
- They tend to be professionals who feel they have spent a good deal of time developing a certain expertise and they want to use this expertise;
- They are full time people who are ultimately accountable or responsible for governmental actions--if something goes wrong, they will hear about it; and
- Because of these factors, they tend to plan in terms of long term effects and to realize that it takes a long time to get some things accomplished.

The role or perspective of citizens is characterized by the following major dimensions:

- They tend to have a more limited scope of interest in that they are concerned with the impact of actions on themselves or on a particular area of town;
- They lack information and resources which limits their ability to participate and makes it more difficult for them to appreciate trade-offs among services;
- While they might acknowledge staff expertise, they feel they should make the major value decisions--are the effects of a commercial development "bad" or "good" for a neighborhood;

- They are part time people who have to balance the time spent in participation efforts with other competing efforts; and

- They tend to want immediate action and view delay as evidence of governmental resistance.

This has been admittedly a simplified discussion and is not meant to imply that these dimensions characterize all citizens and all public officials. However, it does generally describe characteristics that are often encountered.

This difference in perspective is often accompanied by negative attitudes. City officials may feel that citizen participation is an irritant in the government process that slows progress on a variety of issues. They may feel that citizens constantly take an adversarial position that causes officials to experience a great deal of discomfort. In addition, officials may feel that citizen participants are usually uninformed and parochial.

On the other hand, citizens may feel that officials are paternalistic and condescending. They may feel that public officials primarily serve "special" interests and ignore other groups in society. In addition, they may feel that public officials only allow citizens to participate when they are forced, and that they deliberately mislead and otherwise hinder those citizens who choose to participate.

Now if these feelings exist in a city, communication will be very difficult. Citizens will tend to adopt an adversarial position and feel that they have to continually push in order to make officials responsive and accountable. Public officials will tend to avoid citizen participation because it creates problems and makes their job only more difficult. And, in addition, this tends to be a circular situation. Citizens react in a hostile way to the inaction and unresponsiveness of officials, who then try to avoid citizen participation even more vigorously. Once a city is on this merry-go-round, it is difficult to get off.

There are several ways to deal with the misunderstandings and problems that occur from a difference in role perspective and from negative attitudes. First, it is important that officials decide if they want citizen participation in their city. The Overview Module noted a number of benefits that accrue from citizen participation not only for the citizen, but also for government. If officials do not deal with their own negative doubts about citizen participation, these doubts will probably be sensed by the citizens and only reinforce their own negative perceptions.

Given a desire for citizen participation, officials should actively and consistently pursue citizen involvement on a continuing basis. This should help increase governmental credibility. In addition, it should allow public officials and citizens to begin to know one another. It is usually easier to maintain a negative view of someone if contact is limited. However, by working together, it is likely that people will begin to stop relating to others as "roles" rather than as "people." The problems that occur because of differences in role perspectives and negative attitudes are difficult to correct. However, the public official who is interested in citizen participation should be cognizant of these problems and explicitly address them as they are detected.

E. Summary

The overall goal of this module is to familiarize the reader with the importance of effective communication in citizen participation and with some of the major problems affecting communication. After reading this module, the reader should be more aware of and be able to specify:

- types of one-way and two-way techniques that could be used in communication and the advantages and disadvantages of each;
- why establishing local government credibility is important in communication;
- how credibility could be promoted;
- major differences in the role perspectives of citizens and officials and negative views that often accompany those perspectives; and
- what might be done to overcome differences in role perspectives.

Within the context of citizen participation, governmental officials both give information to citizens and receive information from citizens. There are basically two major types of communications techniques: one-way and two-way media. One-way media are good for giving messages, but do not allow the person who receives the information to respond. Types of one-way media are written, oral, and visual. Types of written, one-way media include:

- news releases;
- newspaper columns;
- feature articles or stories;
- annual reports;
- special reports;
- briefing bulletins;
- newsletters;
- official notices or invitations; and
- city government directories.

If well written and conceived, written materials have the following advantages:

- They can potentially reach a large number of people;
- They are reasonably simple to plan and carry out; and
- They are usually inexpensive.

However, written materials have the following limitations:

- People do not always read the information they receive;
- Certain types of people are more likely than others to read the materials;
- They tend to be impersonal;
- There is usually no feedback to indicate if the information was read; and
- They are primarily useful for disseminating information.

Types of oral and visual one-way media are:

- presentations or speeches;
- radio and television; and
- exhibits.

Although presentations and speeches generally reach a smaller number of people, they are a more personal form of communication than written materials and allow the speaker to adjust to a particular audience. In addition, they allow for limited feedback. Television and radio can reach a large number of people, but do not usually allow any feedback to occur. Special exhibits can help viewers to visualize concepts or problems; however, they do not provide feedback.

Two-way communication techniques allow an individual not only to listen, but also to speak. Types of two-way media are one-to-one interaction and one-to-many (groups). One-to-one interaction is effective because it allows two people to outline thoroughly their opinions and to arrive at some understanding. They can observe the other person and make a preliminary determination of motives. In addition, the two people can relate to each other as people rather than as roles. Small groups have many of these same advantages, although they are less effective because more people are present.

It was noted that all the citizen participation mechanisms discussed in this curriculum, with the exception of surveys, promote two-way interaction. These mechanisms provide an overall structure within which two-way interaction is promoted. For communication purposes, these mechanisms can be divided into informal, temporary, and formal, permanent, two-way communication techniques.

Within the context of citizen participation, the credibility of officials is important because it affects how the information exchanged between officials and citizens is interpreted. The lack of credibility creates problems in communication. Credible relationships need to be established in order to avoid unnecessary political problems and to stimulate active citizen involvement.

There are two major dimensions to credibility: expertness and trustworthiness. Expertness is the extent to which a person is perceived to be a source of valid information. Trustworthiness is the degree of confidence in the person's intent to communicate the information he considers to be most valid. Usually city officials do not have problems establishing "expertness." If there is a problem, citizens generally complain that officials do not want to share information; i.e., trustworthiness.

The theory behind establishing trustworthiness is relatively simple; that is, actions should correspond with words and citizens should be given the information they need in order to participate effectively. If local governmental officials say they want citizen input, then their actions should be consistent with this request. In addition, officials need to anticipate what information citizens need in order to participate effectively. Establishing credibility is an issue that deserves the explicit attention of governmental officials. Credibility is easy to lose, but very difficult and time consuming to create.

The different roles occupied by the public official and citizen may cause them to have different perspectives. In addition, these different perspectives may tend to cause public officials and citizens to have negative views of each other.

There are several ways to deal with the misunderstandings and problems that occur from a difference in role perspectives and from negative attitudes. First, officials need to make a conscious decision as to whether they want an active citizen participation program. If officials do not deal with their own negative doubts about citizen participation, these doubts will probably be sensed by the citizens and only reinforce their own negative perceptions. Given a desire for citizen participation, officials should actively and consistently pursue citizen involvement on a continuing basis. This should help citizens and officials to move beyond roles. The public official who is interested in citizen participation should be cognizant of these problems and explicitly address them as they are detected.

FOOTNOTES

1. A Short Course on Cable, Office of Communications, United Church of Christ, June, 1972, p. 4.

2. Ernest Bormann, William S. Howell, Ralph G. Nichols, and George L. Shapiro, "Barriers to Communication," in Interpersonal Communication in the Modern Organization (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), pp. 145-166.

3. Carl I. Hovland, Irving L. Janis, and Harold H. Kelley, Communication and Persuasion (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1953).

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION MECHANISMS

OVERVIEW TO MECHANISMS

In the Overview Module citizen participation was defined as:

> ...the active involvement of citizens with government in the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of policies, strategies, and programs that are related to sustaining or improving the physical socio-economic or political conditions that have an impact on the quality of life in a community.

The Overview Module identified three reasons for promoting citizen participation. First, citizen participation helps to fulfill the values of democratic theory which lie at the heart of our society. The consent process, inherent in citizen participation, balances authority with accountability. Second, governmental officials can derive benefits from citizen participation. Increased citizen participation can contribute to improved governmental efficiency and effectiveness in a number of ways. It provides information that enables officials to assess how well governmental programs and policies meet the needs, values, and priorities of citizens. It facilitates improved linkages between government and the people it serves. And it stimulates people to contribute actively to the improvement of their communities. Third, citizens can derive benefits from participation. Increased contact between citizens and government helps overcome feelings of alienation and apathy, strengthens citizens' commitment to their community, and provides a way for citizens to affect the distribution of government services.

Four major functions were then identified that can be served by increased citizen participation: the information, accessibility, involvement, and accountability functions. The information function refers to the collection of information from and the dissemination of information to citizens. Accessibility refers to making government more open, more approachable, and more penetrable, both to individual citizens and to citizen groups. Involvement refers to the active participation of citizens in the planning and policymaking process. The accountability function refers to making governmental officials answerable for their actions.

A variety of techniques or mechanisms could be incorporated into a citizen participation strategy targeted at the four functions of information, accessibility, involvement, and accountability. In this curriculum seven types of citizen participation mechanisms and their relation to these four functions are discussed. These mechanisms include:

- Task Forces and Blue Ribbon Committees;
- Public Hearings;

- Decentralization--such as Branch Service Facilities, Mini-City Halls, and Multi-Service Centers;
- Territorial Groups--such as Neighborhood Priority Boards and Neighborhood Commissions;
- Functional Groups--such as Civilian Review Boards and Planning or Development Commissions;
- Grievance Processing--such as Ombudsmen and Complaint Bureaus; and
- Surveys.

This module is divided into submodules, with each submodule devoted to one of the seven citizen participation mechanisms mentioned above. Each submodule follows basically the same format. An introduction to the class of mechanisms discussed in that submodule is provided. This is followed by a discussion of how this class of mechanisms relates to the four citizen participation functions. Then major issues related to the design and implementation of the class of mechanisms are discussed. Finally, a case study and summary are provided.

The reader should remember several important facts when reading the Mechanisms Module. The first concerns the types of mechanisms chosen for inclusion. These seven types were included because each represents a major and important class of citizen participation, and together they represent a broad range of types. The types included, however, are in no way meant to be regarded as an exhaustive or comprehensive list of citizen participation mechanisms. Many others might have been included in this module.

Second, in any given location around the country, a particular type of citizen participation mechanism will manifest itself in a different way--having evolved according to the unique circumstances attendant in that community at that time. This underscores that it is not possible to create a citizen participation "cookbook" or series of steps that if followed, will produce the same, predictable results time after time. This module does not attempt to be such a cookbook. Creativity, commitment, and sensitivity to context are essential ingredients in the successful design and implementation of any citizen participation effort.

Finally, the content covered in each submodule reflects the design perspective followed by the curriculum developers. The purpose of the module is to make readers more aware of citizen participation alternatives and of important considerations that impact upon the successful implementation of these citizen participation mechanisms.

Figure 1 presents an overview of the seven types of mechanisms covered in this module. It shows how each type of mechanism potentially relates to the four functions of citizen participation. In preparing this summary chart, the following factors were considered:

- Information Function

  Collection

  1. Automatic--Does the mechanism automatically collect information, or does information collection depend upon initiating other activities?
  2. Bias--Does the mechanism collect information equally well from all types of participants, or is information collection limited to or biased towards certain types of people or groups of people?
  3. Limitations on the Kind of Information Collected--Does the mechanism collect information on a variety of topics or is collection limited in some way to certain substantive areas?

  Dissemination

  1. Automatic--Does the mechanism automatically disseminate information, or does information dissemination depend upon initiating other activities?
  2. Impact--To what types of people and to how many people does the mechanism potentially disseminate information?

- Accessibility Function

  1. Direct--Does the mechanism itself directly promote accessibility, or does the promotion of accessibility depend upon initiating other activities?
  2. Continuous--Is the mechanism a permanent mechanism that continually promotes access, or is it a temporary mechanism that promotes access for a limited period of time?
  3. Officials--To whom is access promoted?
  4. Citizens--For whom is access promoted?

- Involvement Function

  1. Direct--Does the mechanism itself directly promote involvement or does involvement depend upon initiating other activities?
  2. Nature of Involvement--In what ways are citizens involved and what is the potential impact of that involvement?
  3. Number of Citizens--How many citizens could potentially be involved with government through this mechanism?

- Accountability Function
  1. Direct--Does this mechanism itself directly promote accountability, or does accountability depend upon initiating other activities?
  2. Types of Officials--Who is made accountable through the use of this mechanism?

Figure 2 provides a summary of the advantages and constraints of the mechanisms. In preparing this summary chart the following factors were considered:

- Advantages/Constraints
  1. Start-up--Is this mechanism easy to set up or is it hard to set up?
  2. Cost--What is the cost for this type of mechanism relative to other types of citizen participation mechanisms?
  3. Size of City--Is this mechanism equally appropriate for any size of city?
  4. Bias--Is this mechanism biased towards the participation of certain types of people?
  5. Special Skills or Resources--What special skills or resources are needed to implement this mechanism?
  6. Number of Citizens--How many citizens can potentially participate through this type of mechanism?
  7. Political Sensitivity--Is this mechanism particularly sensitive to political considerations?

The key to developing an effective citizen participation strategy for a city or locality is to use a combination of mechanisms and to match mechanisms with functions. Each of the mechanisms or techniques that are discussed in this module impact--in different ways--on the four functions of citizen participation. However, each mechanism has limitations which caution against relying upon only one type of mechanism. Far too many cities have tried to accommodate citizen participation through the use of only a single mechanism only to discover that what they were doing had only limited scope and impact.

For example, surveys relate directly to the information function of citizen participation and indirectly to the accessibility, involvement, and accountability functions. A survey is a very useful technique for collecting information because it is the only mechanism that provides information that is representative of the views of a community. If surveys were the only type of citizen participation mechanism used by a city or locality, however, the strategy would be very limited. If they were used in conjunction with territorial groups which can potentially promote accessibility, involvement, and accountability directly, then the combination of these mechanisms would produce a more balanced approach to citizen participation.

FIGURE 1. A Comparison of Citizen Participation Mechanisms

FUNCTIONS	MECHANISMS		
	Temporary Convenings: Task Forces, Blue Ribbon Committees	Temporary Convenings: Public Hearings, Public Briefings	Territorial Groups: Neighborhood Priority Boards, Commissions
Information A. Collection	• Automatically collects information • Good for elites--biased towards those who are articulate • Can be used to collect information on a range of topics	• Automatically collects information • Biased towards those who are articulate and who take the initiative to attend a public meeting • Can be used to collect information on a variety of topics	• Automatically collects information • Could be biased towards people who are articulate and can attend meetings--generally limited to those people living in certain area of town • Collect information on a range of topics
B. Dissemination	• Automatically disseminates information to participants • Impact limited to size of group	• Automatically disseminates information to those who attend meeting • Impact generally limited to meeting participants	• Could disseminate information on range of topics • Impact generally limited to people who participate or to those living in certain area
Accessibility	• Directly promotes accessibility • Temporary accessibility--not continuous • Generally limited to small number of citizens and small number of officials	• Directly promotes accessibility for people who attend meeting • Temporary accessibility--not continuous • Generally limited to small number of citizens and small number of officials	• Directly promotes access • Continuous accessibility • Could potentially provide access to anyone in government • Promotes access for citizens who are members of group--although group could act as advocate for citizens living in area
Involvement	• Direct involvement • Potential for very active involvement • Limited to members of group	• Directly promotes involvement • Impact is generally limited • Limited to citizens who participate in meeting	• Directly promotes involvement • Potential for very active involvement • Generally limited to those who participate in group
Accountability	• Direct accountability • Generally limited to small number of officials in substantive area being studied by group	• Direct accountability • Generally limited to officials in substantive area being reviewed--although this could affect large number of officials	• Direct accountability--depends upon capability of group members to get information and to challenge government actions • Could cover wide variety of officials

FIGURE 1. A Comparison of Citizen Participation Mechanisms (continued)

MECHANISMS			
Functional Continuing Mechanisms: Commissions, Boards, Authorities, Committees	Decentralization: Branch Service Facility, Multi-Service Centers, Mini-City Halls	Grievance Processing Mechanisms: Ombudsmen, Complaint Bureaus	Surveys
• Automatically collects information • Biased toward those who are able to serve on the groups--good for elites • Can be used to collect information on variety of topics	• Does not automatically collect information--degree to which information is collected depends upon the implementation of other communications techniques or activities • Limited to those people living in particular area of town • Can collect information on range of topics	• Automatically collects information • Not necessarily biased towards any particular type of citizen • For any one complaint, information collected limited to a particular area; however, office could receive complaints on wide variety of topics	• Automatically collects information • Information is representative--not biased against types of people • Can collect information on range of topics about which population has knowledge or opinions
• Automatically disseminates information to group participants--can disseminate to others depending on functions of group • Impact generally limited to group members	• Dissemination not automatic • Impact generally limited to people who live in a certain area • Could disseminate information on range of topics	• Automatically disseminates information to complainant • To extent office publicizes their activities could increase citizen awareness of government operations	• Dissemination not automatic • Impact depends on ways and how widely results are disseminated
• Directly promotes accessibility for group members • Continuous accessibility • Access limited to group members and officials dealing with group's functional area	• Directly promotes accessibility • Continuous accessibility • Access limited to officials in facility unless they act as advocate for citizen • Number of citizens depends on number of neighborhood facilities	• Access often indirect or mediated with grievance processor acting as advocate for citizen • Continuous accessibility • Can potentially provide access for anyone in government • Can potentially provide access for any citizen	• Access indirect and passive • Access is ad hoc • Access could be promoted for population surveyed and to those public officials who use the information
• Directly promotes involvement of group members • Potential for very active involvement in government administration and decisionmaking • Involvement limited to group members	• Indirectly promotes involvement • Reduces some of the barriers to involvement and provides a strong base for initiating neighborhood activities • Nature of involvement depends upon what is initiated • Limited to citizens living in area served by facility	• Does not directly promote involvement--if complaint used for management purposes, citizen can have impact on decisionmaking but no direct involvement • Any citizen potentially could be involved	• Passive and indirect volvement • Limited to subject areas or questions covered on survey • Limited to people included on survey
• Can directly promote accountability depending upon function of group • Any official potentially could be made accountable	• Indirectly promotes accountability--dependent upon government holding employees responsible for quality of service • Type of officials affected generally limited to officials within facility	• Direct accountability--public officials held responsible for impact of their activities on citizen • Especially effective if series of complaints are analyzed and used for management • Any official could be made accountable	• Indirectly promotes accountability--dependent upon willingness of local officials to use information to evaluate performance of government • Can potentially affect any government official

FIGURE 2. A Comparison of Citizen Participation Mechanisms: Advantages and Constraints

	MECHANISMS			
	Temporary Convenings: Task Forces, Blue Ribbon Committees	Temporary Convenings: Public Hearings, Public Briefings	Territorial Groups: Neighborhood Priority Boards, Commissions	
Advantages	• Could be set up quickly on ad hoc basis • Relatively inexpensive • Can be used in any size city	• Can be set up quickly • Relatively inexpensive • Can be used in any size city • Does not require special skills or resources	• Major symbol of government interest • Good base for programs directed towards a neighborhood	
Constraints	• Biased towards articulate people • Takes skill to run effective meeting • Number of people who can participate limited • Politically sensitive in that may lack credibility	• Biased towards articulate people • Politically sensitive in that may lack credibility • Number of people who can participate limited	• Takes relatively long time to establish • Relatively expensive--depending upon scope of system • Most applicable to medium or large cities • Biased towards those who have time to participate • Special skills or resources depend upon scope of system	

FIGURE 2. A Comparison of Citizen Participation Mechanisms: Advantages and Constraints (continued)

MECHANISMS			
Functional Continuing Mechanisms: Commissions, Boards, Authorities, Committees	Decentralization: Branch Service Facility, Multi-Service Centers, Mini-City Halls	Grievance Processing Mechanisms: Ombudsmen, Complaint Bureaus	Surveys
• Moderately easy to set up • Relatively inexpensive depending upon function of group • Can be used in any size city • Special skills and resources required for implementation are minimal • Generally not politically sensitive unless involved in investigative or evaluative activities--then it may threaten public officials	• Not biased towards types of people (although this is dependent on activities)	• Relatively inexpensive • Could be used in any size city • Not biased towards types of people • Can be used by relatively large group of people	• Moderately inexpensive • Can be used in any sized city • Not biased--provides representative information • Can involve large number of people • Not particularly sensitive politically, but depends on information collected and how used
• Participation generally biased toward elites • Relatively few citizens can participation	• Takes relatively long time to establish and difficult to implement • Relatively expensive • Most applicable for medium or large sized cities • Personnel need good organizational skills; need neighborhood building • Particularly subject to political attacks--may stimulate unrealistic expectations	• Moderately difficult to set up • Personnel need knowledge of government and skill in dealing with people • Generally limited in scope to types of complaints made • Politically sensitive in that it could threaten government personnel	• Relatively difficult to set up depending on scope • Requires professional advice and assistance

As was said earlier, the information provided in this module is designed to help the reader achieve an increased understanding and awareness of how each type of mechanism could be used to stimulate citizen participation. In addition, this material should help the reader in dealing with some of the key issues involved in implementing a particular citizen participation mechanism. The reader should always be aware that citizen participation takes place in a political environment. Thus, the type of strategy followed will undoubtedly be affected by the political situation in a certain area. Following the suggestions offered in this material concerning the design and implementation of alternative citizen participation mechanisms will not automatically result in a successful citizen participation program. Nor will the use of citizen participation mechanisms eliminate tough political decisions that are made concerning the allocation of scarce resources. However, after reading this material, the reader should recognize the importance of matching the purposes of a particular participation effort with an appropriate mechanism and of using a combination of different citizen participation mechanisms.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION MECHANISMS:
LONG TERM CONVENINGS

The overall goal of this submodule is to familiarize the reader with the use of task forces and blue ribbon committees as a form of citizen participation. After completing this submodule, the reader should be aware of and be able to specify:

- different functions of task forces and blue ribbon committees;
- major design issues involved in implementing a task force or blue ribbon committee; and
- a variety of group techniques that could be used in a temporary convening.

LONG TERM CONVENINGS

A. Introduction

Bringing citizens together in a meeting for some purpose is a common type of citizen participation mechanism. As a citizen participation device, convenings can be used alone or in conjunction with a formal structure, such as a neighborhood commission.

This particular submodule deals with temporary convenings that are relatively long term. Examples are blue ribbon panels and task forces.

The next submodule deals with temporary convenings that are relatively short term--such as public hearings and public briefings. While sometimes these mechanisms might last for a year or more, they are all temporary because they will be disbanded after accomplishing a certain purpose. These mechanisms are different from a civilian review board or neighborhood commission which is a permanent structure that performs certain tasks continually over a period of time.

In many ways, temporary and permanent convenings share similar problems and issues, although a permanent convening encounters the additional problems involved in maintaining that structure over a long period of time. Thus, while parts of this manual could be relevant to permanent convenings, it will not cover all the problems involved in implementing and maintaining such a structure. These issues will be covered in a later submodule dealing with organizing groups around functional or territorial areas.

B. Functions

This section discusses the functions of task forces and blue ribbon committees. What each potentially could accomplish depends upon the number of times it will meet, the type and number of participants, the specific purpose, and the amount of structure provided by the staff. With these considerations in mind, the following outlines how successfully these mechanisms fulfill the four broad functions of citizen participation discussed in the first module; that is, the information, accessibility, involvement, and accountability functions. In addition, a general discussion is presented of the advantages and disadvantages of a task force or blue ribbon committee.

With regard to the information function, a task force or blue ribbon committee can collect or disseminate information. Information is collected within a group setting regarding the participant's substantive knowledge and opinions on a certain issue or problem area. Because the number of people who can participate is usually limited, there is the possibility of close interaction between citizens and governmental officials. A convening is a good communication device because it promotes face-to-face interaction and offers the possibility of immediate feedback.

However, the quality of the information collected within the group is closely tied to the quality of the participants. This type of mechanism is biased towards people who are articulate and who have the time and initiative to attend meetings. It takes a good deal of time and initiative to even attend most convenings, and once the person is there, it requires verbal skill and self-confidence to express an opinion. Thus, while a task force or blue ribbon committee is useful for some information purposes--such as pooling the talent and knowledge of key people in the community to address a certain issue--seldom does one get representative views.

A task force or blue ribbon committee can also be used to disseminate information. It allows citizens to become involved in an issue and creates the potential for them to learn more about the perspective of governmental officials and what efforts have taken place in the past to address a certain issue or problem area. However, while information can be disseminated, it only impacts on a few people. Thus, the dissemination of information is usually a secondary purpose.

Task forces and blue ribbon committees can also serve to increase the accessibility of governmental officials, although only in a limited way. It allows citizens who are participants in the task force or blue ribbon committee to meet the public officials who are dealing with the particular issue area. However, this is usually accessibility for a limited amount of participants to a limited amount of governmental officials.

Assuming that officials are sincerely interested in the input of citizens, task forces and blue ribbon committees are a means to involve citizens in governmental operations. Depending upon the particular topic area and charge of the group, citizens can become involved in directly impacting upon governmental policy through recommendations arising from the group. By involving citizens in addressing a certain problem--such as a task force examining the revitalization of a central business district--one promotes identification with the project. Thus, through participation, citizens tend to view the project as their own and not something that is a governmental mandate. This builds support for a certain project.

For any particular task force or blue ribbon committee, opportunities for this type of involvement are limited to a relatively small number of people. However, while involvement is limited within a certain group, a government could have a number of different task forces or committees. This would increase the number of opportunities for involvement, but still maintain the effectiveness of the small groups.

And finally, task forces and blue ribbon committees can be used to increase the accountability of government. This occurs in those situations in which the group is examining public actions and making recommendations concerning a certain problem. The extent to which this mechanism makes officials feel more accountable generally depends upon the type of participants, the amount of independence bestowed upon the group, and the amount of publicity given to the group.

In summary, a task force or blue ribbon committee can be a useful citizen participation mechanism. It can be set up quickly on an ad hoc basis and is relatively inexpensive to operate. It can be used to collect information from and to pool the talents of people who may have an interest in a particular subject area. It could be used to involve citizens in planning and problem solving and to build support among participants for a certain course of action. A task force or blue ribbon committee can be used--in a more limited way--to disseminate information and to promote accessibility and accountability.

As a means to promote citizen participation, a task force or blue ribbon committee has several potential disadvantages. First, it is biased towards people who are articulate and who have the time and initiative to attend meetings. Second, in most situations, the number of people who can participate is very limited. Third, task forces or blue ribbon committees may lack credibility. Many local governments have used this type of mechanism as a means to "rubber stamp" policy directives that have already been decided upon by government. There is no reason why this type of mechanism has to be a rubber stamp; however, because they have at times degenerated into such a purpose, they may lack widespread credibility among the citizenry. Thus, in implementing a task force or blue ribbon committee, these negative attitudes may have to be addressed.

In addition, in operating a task force or blue ribbon committee, the following problems may arise:

- poor attendance;
- attenders do not participate in discussion;
- participants make unrealistic and ill-informed comments;

- discussion drifts;
- participants become hostile; and
- little is accomplished.

Whether or not these problems appear depends to a great extent upon how the convening is structured. While a number of constraints confront the staff, if the local officials are sincere in eliciting citizen views through the convening, most of these problems can be successfully addressed.

The next few sections examine in detail the implementation of a temporary convening and offer suggestions concerning how some of these problems could be avoided.

C. Implementation and Major Design Issues

1. Introduction

While a number of factors affect the success of a task force or blue ribbon committee, major considerations are:

- the clarity of purpose;
- the clarity of process;
- the membership of the convening; and
- the staff work.

It is very important that everyone is clear on what the task force is expected to accomplish. This commonsensical point is all too often neglected. It affects not only the quality of participation, but also individual evaluations of whether the process was worthwhile. Citizens can be disillusioned with their participation if they misunderstand the purpose and thus expect more than can be delivered.

In addition, it is important that participants understand the process followed in the task force or blue ribbon committee. This involves procedural questions concerning how things are going to be accomplished. For a smooth working convening the participants should understand and accept the rules of the game. This also affects the expectations of the participants and consequently their subjective evaluations of success.

Another very important aspect is the membership of the task force or committee. Nothing can substitute for good people. They represent the raw material in the process, and the quality of their participation directly affects the outcome. This quality can be affected by the structure of the meeting, but structure cannot replace a strong core of participants.

And finally, the quality of staff work will also affect the success of the convening. Without adequate staff participation and direction, many of the disadvantages noted in the previous section are bound to appear.

The next few sections cover the steps involved in implementing and operating a temporary convening and discuss in detail each of the major factors affecting success.

2. Need and Purpose of the Convening

From the very beginning, the purpose of the convening should be explicit, specific, and realistic. This purpose could range from a review of a new policy initiative or program undertaken by a city to a fact-finding and problem-solving process. While the staff may not want to be overbearing in this regard, it is important that some type of boundaries are placed on the subject matter at the very beginning. If this is not done, the task force could waste a good deal of time debating what it should do. In addition, if the charge is not specific enough, or if it is too open-ended, the task force might find that it cannot reasonably accomplish its goals.

In addition, it is important that the staff be sincere in what they want to accomplish. The previous section mentioned that one disadvantage of a task force or blue ribbon committee is that it has often been used to rubber stamp governmental initiatives. This decreases credibility and trust. If the task force or committee is billed as a fact-finding process, participants should shape the direction of the report.

In addition, the staff should not try to oversell the potential outcomes. Overselling is easy to do because the staff is anxious to get people to participate. However, heightened expectations that are not met inevitably lead to disillusionment. Thus, even though a task force or blue ribbon committee has accomplished a good deal, if it does not accomplish what people had expected it would, they will view the process negatively, and the staff will lose credibility and trust.

3. Recruitment and Roles of Participants

Membership or attendance at the temporary convening can be determined either through election, invitation, or self-selection. Election is usually combersome and expensive and is generally not used for temporary convenings. Invitation or appointment is generally used for task forces or blue ribbon panels because the staff wants to insure that certain people participate. In addition, political considerations--such as ensuring the participation of representatives from key groups in the city who are interested in a certain issue--can be easily accommodated through invitation. While self-selection is seldom used, it is generally useful in situations where it is important that the process is viewed as open.

However, officials may consider a strategy that involves some invitation and some self-selection. The securing of membership provides an opportunity for involving new people in the government and may have useful future benefits--such as recruiting potential community leaders. A criticism of task forces or blue ribbon committees is that they are closed and only offer opportunities for a few to participate. Whatever criteria is developed for recruiting membership, it is important that participants reflect a range of perspectives and experiences, and that people are represented who may be involved in implementing an action arising from the convening.

Once membership has been determined, participants need to understand their role and responsibilities in the process. Thus, in addition to being explicit about the overall purpose of the convening, it is equally important that participants understand what role they will play in accomplishing the final outcome. For example, the role of the participants may be to review and assess a development plan and their responsibility may be to produce recommendations concerning a definite strategy. The understanding of roles and responsibilities helps establish the rules of the game and helps set realistic expectations for participants.

And finally, as part of the recruitment process, participants should receive a packet of materials explaining the purpose of the convening and their role and providing other substantive information that is necessary. While large amounts of written materials should be avoided, participants should have something to read before the meeting. Providing material before the meeting might lead to more informed and considered opinions. In addition, it indicates that officials are sincerely interested in the opinions of citizens and are willing to provide the information to citizens so that they can participate effectively. Enough information should be provided so that the person can participate effectively, but not too much information so that the participant is overburdened.

4. Staff Support

A crucial factor affecting the success of a task force or blue ribbon committee is the quality of staff support. Depending upon the substantive scope, the operating of a task force requires a good deal of work. The size of the staff is, of course, dependent upon the amount of work that needs to be done. Generally, staff will be responsible for helping with the agenda, setting up the meeting room, preparing any visual aids, collecting information and writing background papers, writing minutes of the meetings, and maintaining communication with members between meetings.

From the beginning, staff should work to make participants aware of and interested in the proceedings of the task force or blue ribbon committee, and to promote feelings of trust and credibility towards the staff. There is a tendency for tension to build up between part-time people (i.e., task force members) and full-time people (i.e., the staff). The staff may feel that participants are making unrealistic and ill-informed suggestions, and are unnecessarily preventing movement towards the accomplishment of the objectives of the task force or blue ribbon committee. The participants may feel that staff is really not interested in their opinions and that staff has some kind of hidden agenda or preconceived idea concerning the substantive output of the group. Thus, staff needs to be sensitive to the needs and concerns of participants in order to prevent these types of feelings from occurring and to promote trust and credibility. While there may be a need for staff to provide structure to the process in order to prevent drift, they should not provide so much structure that participation is stifled. Staff can provide structure by encouraging the task force to agree on rules for the proceedings, by providing adequate support to the variety of activities undertaken by the group, by ensuring that important issues are not overlooked, and by encouraging the setting of deadlines for the different phases of the process. The quality of staff work will have a major impact on the overall success of the task force or advisory group.

5. Setting

The actual physical setting of the convening can affect attendance and the quality of participation. The authors had an experience with a task force which illustrates this point. The group of around twenty people usually met in one location. The well lit meeting room comfortably accomodated the participants around a rectangular table. Sessions were characterized by lively discussion and all members actively participated. However, for the sixth meeting of the group, the usual meeting room was unavailable. Different meeting accomodations were secured at a local hotel. The meeting was held in a large room with a high ceiling and barely adequate lighting. Tables were arranged in a rectangle with a large open space in the middle. Even though the topic of the meeting was one in which participants were interested, there was very little participation. We felt this was primarily due to the setting. People felt inhibited because of the size of the room and the distance among participants. Thus, the actual physical setting of the meeting can have a definite impact on the quality of the interaction.

There are several major design considerations which should be noted in arranging the physical setting for the meeting. First, the convening should be held in an easily accessible place with adequate parking facilities and at a time convenient for most members. If the location of the meeting is difficult for members to get to--either because of lack of parking facilities or lack of public transportation--attendance may be affected. In addition, in setting up a time for the meeting, staff needs to be cognizant of the preferences of participants and decide upon a time that is convenient for most.

The room should be arranged to facilitate interaction. People tend to talk more easily in a well set up room. This can be done by grouping people in a circle or rectangle with care given to make it as small as numbers permit. However, packing people too close together can create tension. In addition, avoid using a long narrow table.

Nameplaces should be provided for each participant if it is expected that most people do not know each other. This allows a participant to become familiar with other members and promotes cooperation.

Adequate space should be available for the display of visuals. Visuals target members' attention and can help keep discussion from drifting.

All of these points should be consciously considered in designing the setting because they can affect the outcomes of the convening. If the meeting is located in a place that is difficult to get to, and if it is held at a time that is inconvenient for members, attendance will be low. If members are spaced too far apart and do not know each other, they may be hesitant to actively participate in discussions.

6. Conducting the Meeting

One of the most important aspects of conducting a successful meeting is leadership. A strong leader can draw out contributions from participants, identify and clarify opposing points of view, and summarize themes occurring in the discussion. Generally, the leader guides the discussion from problem to solution.

Leadership can originate from several sources. Generally, the person who chairs the meeting guides the discussion. Who chairs the meeting is dependent, to a large extent, on the purpose of the convening. If the task force is studying a problem and making recommendations, then credibility might be increased if one of the members chairs the convening.

If this occurs, it is more difficult for staff to provide leadership and direction. If a member chairs the meeting, staff should encourage the selection of a person who can maintain impartiality during the discussion and who has experience in conducting meetings.

In addition, some cities have experimented with hiring an outside expert in group dynamics to act as a facilitator of the meeting. While this person may not formally chair the meeting, his acknowledged role is to stimulate and structure group activities, ensuring that discussion does not drift or become bogged down in esoteric arguments. In addition, the person can extract major points being made by participants and try to provide a framework for the discussion. The facilitator can probe the arguments presented by different people in order to ensure that everyone correctly understands the implications of what is being said. Generally, a facilitator can greatly streamline group activities and can stimulate the participation of most members. This person can supplement staff activities, and if someone with well-developed skills is obtained, can have a major impact on the success of the convening.

Once the task force has been convened, it is important that everyone understand why they are there. Never underestimate the ability of people to misunderstand. If the task force is examining a certain problem, be sure that everyone recognizes that a problem exists and that something should be done about it. Otherwise, the participants may constantly debate the question of whether this group should even be in existence. Usually these problems or misunderstandings can be cleared up in the first meeting.

At the beginning some members may feel uncomfortable in participating. The previous section offered suggestions for designing the setting to facilitate participation. In addition, in order to promote discussion, it is important to get people talking early. Once a person has spoken, psychological barriers are broken down, and it is more likely that the person will speak again. Promoting of an informal, open atmosphere encourages participation.

In addition, the task force or committee needs to reach agreement on procedural issues. Prominent among these are how decisions will be made. If a report is to be produced, it is probably wise to vote on issues as they are raised. Thus, consensus is built as the meeting progresses.

Finally, it is important to document group actions. This includes not only major decisions on which participants vote, but also important arguments that are presented during the process of reaching a decision. Thus, you not only avoid making the same decisions twice, but you also begin to build a rationale for your actions.

This discussion has highlighted some of the major issues in conducting a meeting. While most of the suggestions are common sense, these points rarely receive enough attention. This is unfortunate because how a meeting is conducted has a major impact on the outcome and upon individual perceptions of utility.

7. Group Techniques

A variety of group techniques can be used to increase the effectiveness of convenings. Generally, these techniques try to systematize and strengthen group process. Types of techniques that will be briefly discussed are: 1) map and chart room; 2) nominal group techniques; 3) Delphi techniques; and 4) analysis frameworks.

a. Map and Chart Room. This technique can be used to organize information used by the group. A map and chart room introduces contextuality into group problem solving. This room displays information about the context of a problem or issue that is being examined by the task force or blue ribbon committee. The collecting and displaying of pertinent information not only helps in identifying trends and past conditions, but also helps in targeting the attention of the participants to the subject and in reducing the tendency to make flippant statements. For example, a map and chart for a task force on housing might include displays for: housing values in parts of a city; availability of rental units, age of housing stock density; and lack of plumbing in housing units.

The actual design of a map and chart room could vary from the stringing of a clothesline on which graphic displays could be displayed to the installation of multiple tracts into the ceiling and cork board on the walls that would establish the map and chart room as a permanent location. Such a room has been used with varying degrees of success by some local governments and school systems.

b. Nominal Group Techniques. One problem in any group is to generate ideas from participants and to avoid having the ideas of one or two people dominate the meeting. Nominal group techniques (NGT) can facilitate identifying aspects of a problem or proposed solution and establishing priorities for action.

NGT involves the following process:

- First, individuals spend five to ten minutes writing ideas in response to a question presented by the leader.
- Second, each individual shares his ideas with the other members without a group discussion.
- Third, all the ideas are recorded on a poster or some other visually prominent display, and the merits are discussed by the group.
- Fourth, members can vote on prioritizing the statements.

The following is an example of how a nominal group technique might operate. A task force, made up of representatives from the city council, administration, and established citizen groups, is examining the viability of a particular city's citizen participation strategy. In order to begin discussing the nature of the problem, the leader of the group asks participants to individually write down their responses to the following

111

question: "What are the strengths and weaknesses of the present citizen participation strategy?" After the participants have finished writing, the leader goes around the group in a round robin fashion and asks each person to identify one strength or weakness of the city's citizen participation. This process is repeated until all the individual comments have been exhausted. The individual comments are written on large sheets of paper in the front of the room and organized under the general heading of "strengths" and "weaknesses." Then the group discusses the merits of the individual suggestions and notes if any important issues have been overlooked.

Generally, this can be an effective technique in facilitating group interaction, although there may be occasions in which it is not appropriate. For example, if the purpose of the task force or convening is primarily to disseminate and exchange information, this technique might be too cumbersome. In addition, NGT takes a considerable amount of time and is effective only if the group has a familiarity and interest in the problem.

c. Delphi Techniques. The Delphi technique is generally not used within a meeting. It is a method for pooling the talents of a number of people in estimating the likelihood of occurances in the future. The Delphi technique has been used in two major ways:

- for making factual judgments (i.e., as an aid for improving trend extrapolation, event anticipation, planning, decisionmaking, forecasting, and prediction); and,
- for making value judgments (i.e., as a method to identify and measure goals and objectives, identify and establish priorities, and identify and establish preferences).

Generally, in the past, Delphi has been used by high technology research centers and industry for making factual judgments.

Those administering a Delphi select a panel of participants (the participants are often "experts" in the area under investigation). Each member of the panel is given a list of events and asked to make several determinations about each one--for example, what is the probability that the event will have occurred by a certain date, how desirable is it if the event does occur, or how familiar is the panel member with the technology associated with the event. The responses from all the participants are then aggregated and a statistical summary of the results prepared. Those participants giving responses which deviate radically from the norm are asked to justify or explain their responses. Each participant then receives feedback--in the form of the statistical summary and information about extreme responses--and another set of events about which he is to make determinations. This procedure then goes through several iterations. Throughout the entire process, the anonymity of the participants is maintained.

It is hoped that this process will: 1) generate convergence among participants about the events in question or highlight underlying polarities; 2) facilitate better informed judgments about the events in question;

and 3) through the anonymous exchange of information, stimulate or liberate insights about conditions or processes influencing the events.

A number of variations of this process can be employed in executing a Delphi. The variations can be caused by the anticipated uses of the results, the subject area under investigation, the composition of the panel, or the major purpose of the exercise.

The Delphi technique has been criticized on several grounds. In the first place, the output can be no better than the input. If the design of the exercise is itself deficient, then the results are likely to be stilted or meaningless. Criticisms are also aimed at the instability of the panel membership over several iterations, and at the possibility that the exercise itself will lead to self-fulfilling or self-defeating prophecies in the area under investigation. If you have 40 major experts participate in a Delphi on a subject about which only 100 people have any real expertise, you are in effect engaging in a major interventionary effort--whether you want to or not. In short, many people find the technique far too "soft" and argue that it can produce misleading results.

The Delphi technique also has several advantages. In subject areas that are inherently "soft" and full of speculation, the technique yields group decisions that are more accurate and reliable than individual decisions would be. In addition, it facilitates what is best about collaborative decisionmaking, while at the same time avoiding many of the shortcomings associated with face-to-face interaction. It is helpful in generating reasonable judgments about the likelihood, desirability, feasibility, and probable impact of the occurrence of certain events, and in identifying goals, preferences, and priorities.

d. Frameworks for Analysis. One purpose of a task force or blue ribbon committee is to examine a problem and recommend solutions. Depending upon the problem area, this is often a difficult and complex task. One way to facilitate movement from problem to solution is to use some type of analysis framework.

A variety of these frameworks have been developed, and their conceptual stages or steps usually overlap somewhat.

Harold D. Lasswell[1] has identified five intellectual tasks that could be used for problem solving. Briefly, they are:

- Goal Clarification--Clarify desirable end states.
- Trend Description--Answer the questions: Where are we? How far have we come in achieving what we are aiming at? Where are the positive and negative instances of success or failure?
- Analysis of Conditions--What factors have conditioned the direction and magnitude of the trends described?

- Projection of Developments--If current policies are continued, what will probably happen in the future?

- Invention, Evaluation, and Selection of Alternatives--What strategies can be pursued to realize stated goals?

Following these steps or variations on the scheme could assist in providing order to the problem solving process.

Frank Snell[2] has developed a "solution wheel" that in some ways overlaps Lasswell's scheme. Briefly, the steps involved in Snell's scheme are as follows:

- Step 1: What is the problem?--Clearly state the problem. Limit the subject if possible. Define the problem by using examples.

- Step 2: How did we get here?--State what is known about the problem, how long it has existed, what brought the problem into being, and what are or will be the effects of the problem.

- Step 3: Where do we want to come out?--What is the goal?

- Step 4: Possible answers--Answer the question: What must an acceptable solution do? How many solutions are feasible? What are drawbacks? Is there a combined solution?

- Step 5: What is the best solution?--Which solution is best, and which solution can everybody agree upon?

- Step 6: Implementation--Design a workable strategy for implementing the solution.

These two frameworks have been presented to offer some ideas on structuring the problem solving process. Obviously, what type of framework that is used depends upon the purpose of the task force or advisory commission and upon how comfortable the group is with the process. In some cases, such a framework is too cumbersome and unnecessary. However, explicitly considering how the group can move from problem to solution will save time and increase the effectiveness of the group.

D. Case Study

The use of task forces and blue ribbon panels is well exemplified in the case of a rapidly growing city's attempt to construct a major convention center. The administration of this city is headed by a mayor who is quite aggressive and a strong proponent of economic development. His administration has been committed to the development of a major convention center, one which he has claimed would result in major increases in tourism, convention business, and commerce for the city.

The administration plan for the convention center development requires both public and elite support. Though the city owns the land upon which the center would be developed--it is located in a deteriorating central city area--a major bond issue would have to be approved by the voters for the construction of the facility. In addition, the city administration hoped to stimulate massive private development in the area and to coordinate this private development with the public convention center development. This required the support and cooperation of elite groups in the city--especially the business community. The result would be a major boost to the city's economy, a large increase in jobs, and the renewal of a blighted part of town.

After more than a year of winning support and laying the groundwork for this project, the mayor appointed a blue ribbon committee "to advise the city on the preparation of plans and specifications for construction of a convention center." The members of the panel were carefully selected to represent those groups in the community essential to the successful implementation of the total project. The committee included the most influential people in the community affiliated with its most powerful institutions. These included the publisher of the city's newspaper, the chairmen of the board of a bank, representatives from two savings and loan associations, the president of an insurance company, a major land developer and financier, an influential architect, the executive director of the Chamber of Commerce, the board president of a major regional marketing chain headquartered in the city, and the president of City Council. City personnel primarily from the department of community and economic development and headed by the Mayor's chief executive assistant were assigned to staff the committee. At the same time, a private sector staff was assembled and operated out of the Chamber of Commerce to facilitate and coordinate the planning of private sector development and participation in the overall project.

In addition, a number of subcommittees were formed. These included a project liaison subcommittee (charged with monitoring private sector development in the area and facilitating the coordination of that development with the development of the public convention center), a financial subcommittee (charged primarily with designing a program to build support for the bond issue voters would have to approve for the facility), and a design subcommittee (charged with making recommendations for and reviewing the plans for the physical design and management of the center). Each of these subcommittees were provided staff, though in many instances the subcommittee staff were the same as those for the whole committee.

The blue ribbon committee met monthly--although ad hoc meetings were held. At the plenary meetings committee members reviewed staff efforts, suggested tasks for staff, and received, reviewed, and coordinated subcommittee reports. Staff sent comprehensive briefing materials to committee members well in advance of each meeting, and met informally with individual committee members and subcommittee chairmen between meetings. At the monthly meeting, formal decisions were made. The groundwork for these decisions was carefully laid out in advance of every meeting. By voting on major parts of the plan as they were developed, the blue ribbon committee incrementally built support for the entire package.

City Council approved a special appropriation of $187,000 to finance the committee and the staff for the first year. In addition, special appropriations were made for outside consulting firms to conduct studies on such things as land use.

At various stages during the first year planning effort, press conferences were held and news releases issued to publicize the city's plans for the convention center. Shortly after a year of planning, final plans for the convention center had been approved by the administration with the committee's recommendation.

Shortly before final convention center plans were approved, citizens residing in the area of the proposed development or in areas that would be most affected by the development began complaining about the project. Their complaints were aired before city council and at a press conference. The substance of the complaints was that the project had been designed without sufficient consideration being given to its impact on the citizens residing in these areas and that in many cases this impact was negative. Residents were afraid that the development would alter the character of the neighborhoods they lived in, and drive many of the residents out because of rising land values and taxes. In addition, they felt that a major amount of public money was being spent on this project that would benefit the business community and virtually none on improving the life quality of those citizens--most of whom are relatively poor--residing in the area. Consequently, these residents were organizing to have the project redesigned or rejected.

The administration realized both that the support of the residents of this area was necessary if the project were to succeed and that they had neglected to involve some of those groups who would be affected by the convention center development project. In response to the complaints and concerns raised by these citizens, final administration approval of the project was postponed while an impact analysis and needs assessment was conducted. Though the project was delayed eight months, the final plans that were approved had the support of area residents and were much more comprehensive than the original set of plans. Elements in the final plans that were absent from the original plans focused on such things as tax abatement programs for area residents, capital improvements in the residential areas in or adjacent to the convention center development project area, and increased social services for these areas.

This case study highlights a number of important considerations regarding blue ribbon committees and task forces. First, though great care was taken to involve important groups in the community whose support would be necessary to implement the convention center development project, a mistake was made not to involve those who would be affected by it. This underscores the political dimension of citizen participation, one of the limitations inherent in blue ribbon committees, and the sensitivity of selecting members for temporary convenings. In this particular city, the project was not abandoned because of this omission, but it was postponed for a considerable period of time.

Second, though this case study only alludes to the organization and dynamics of the meetings held by the blue ribbon committee, care was taken to make these meetings successful and productive. Most of the important design considerations referenced in the previous section were followed by the staff and contributed to the smooth operation of the committee. The committee made the best use of the time of its members. Meetings were held only as often as were needed, and the time of the committee members was not wasted. The setting provided by the meeting was appropriate for the participants and the purpose. All the members were well briefed on the purpose of the committee and the purpose of their participation. Adequate staff and resources were devoted to the committee.

This example also illustrates how task forces or blue ribbon committees relate to the four citizen participation functions. The blue ribbon committee structure provided a way to involve community influentials in the design and development of a major community project. This resulted in a better planned, larger, and more comprehensive development than the city could have produced by itself. The committee also facilitated the transfer of information from the city to certain groups in the private sector and from these groups to the city. It also facilitated direct access among these groups. Finally, the committee promoted accountability--albeit of a limited nature, because it originally did not extend to area residents--in the sense that a major government initiative was subject to the scrutiny and input of certain important community interests.

E. Summary

The overall goal of this submodule is to familiarize the reader with the use of task forces and blue ribbon committees as a form of citizen participation. After completing this submodule the reader should be aware of and be able to specify:

- different functions of task forces and blue ribbon committees;
- major design issues involved in implementing a task force or blue ribbon committee; and
- a variety of group techniques that could be used in a temporary convening.

A task force or blue ribbon committee could potentially impact on the four functions of citizen participation. What each potentially could accomplish depends upon the number of times it will meet, the type and number of participants, the specific purpose and the amount of structure provided by staff. The following summarizes how task forces and blue ribbon committees relate to the four functions of citizen participation.

- Information--Information is collected within a group setting regarding the participants' substantive knowledge and opinions on a certain issue or problem area. However, the number of people who can participate is limited and it is biased towards people who are articulate and who have the time and initiative to attend meetings. Information can be disseminated through this mechanism, but only to a limited number of people.
- Accessibility--Task forces and blue ribbon committees can increase the accessibility of governmental officials, although only in a limited way. It allows citizens who are participants in the group to meet the public officials who are dealing with a particular issue area.
- Involvement--By participating in task forces and blue ribbon committees, citizens can become involved in impacting directly upon governmental policy through recommendations arising from the group. However, for any particular group opportunities for this type of involvement are limited.
- Accountability--An increased sense of accountability occurs when the group is examining public actions and making recommendations concerning a certain problem.

Major design factors involved in implementing a task force or blue ribbon committee are:

- the clarity of purpose;
- the clarity of the process;

- the membership of the convening; and

- the staff work.

Important design statements which appear in the discussion of these factors are:

- the purpose of the convening should be explicit, specific, and realistic;

- do not oversell potential outcomes of the convening and, consequently, build unrealistic expectations that cannot be reached;

- pay close attention to membership--generally, it is important that participants reflect a range of perspectives and experiences and that people are represented who may be involved in implementing an action arising from the convening;

- participants need to understand what is their role in the process;

- as part of the recruitment process, participants should receive a packet of materials explaining the purpose of the convening and their role, and providing other substantive information that is necessary;

- the quality of staff work has a major impact on the overall success of the convening--generally, the staff should: 1) provide enough structure to prevent drift; 2) endeavor to make participants aware of and interested in the proceedings; 3) promote feelings of trust and credibility; 4) provide adequate background materials; 5) adhere to deadlines; and 6) ensure that important issues are not overlooked;

- the convening should be held in an easily accessible place and at a time convenient for most members;

- the room should be arranged to facilitate interaction--group people in a circle or rectangle with care given to make it as small as numbers permit;

- provide adequate space for visuals;

- leadership is important in conducting a meeting--the leader should draw out contributions from participants, identify and clarify opposing points of view and summarize themes occurring in the discussion;

- staff might consider using a facilitator to streamline group activities and to stimulate the participation of members;

- in order to promote discussion, it is important to get people talking early in the meeting; and

- group decisions should be documented in order to avoid making the same decisions twice and to build systematically a rationale for the group's actions.

In addition, a variety of group techniques aimed at systematizing and strengthening the group process are discussed. Types of techniques are: 1) map and chart room; 2) nominal group techniques; 3) Delphi techniques; and 4) analysis frameworks.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION MECHANISMS:
SHORT TERM CONVENINGS

The overall goal of this submodule is to promote understanding of how a public hearing or briefing could be used effectively as a citizen participation mechanism. After completing this submodule, the reader should be more aware of and be able to specify:

- how public hearings and briefings relate to the four functions of citizen participation; and

- major design considerations involved in implementing a public hearing or briefing.

SHORT TERM CONVENINGS

A. Introduction

This submodule deals with temporary convenings that are relatively short term. Examples are public hearings and public briefings. The major differences between these mechanisms and the previous set of mechanisms (task forces and blue ribbon committees) are the time of duration and general purpose. Task forces and blue ribbon committees can last for up to a year (or longer), have as their general purpose the studying of a certain issue or problem, and have a continuing membership over the life of the study. Public hearings or public briefings generally last a shorter period of time--sometimes involving only one meeting. The purpose of the meeting is usually to provide an opportunity for citizens to react to governmental plans or initiatives.

B. Functions

This section discusses the success of public hearings or briefings in fulfilling the four broad functions of citizen participation; that is, the information, accessibility, involvement, and accountability functions. The accomplishments of public hearings or briefings will depend upon the number of meetings held, the number and type of participants, the amount of structure provided by staff, and the willingness of staff to use the information gained in the meeting.

A public hearing or briefing can collect and disseminate information. Information is collected within a group setting. Generally, hearings are held to get public reactions to a government plan or initiative. There is a great deal of flexibility in the range of topics that could be covered in a public hearing. However, in order to participate effectively, citizens need to understand the plan or initiative being proposed. Thus, if a public hearing is eliciting citizen reactions and suggestions to a plan for spending community development money, citizens need to understand clearly what is being proposed, and what constraints exist on the spending of this money. Without sufficient information, citizens will not be able to assess adequately the impact of the proposal.

In addition, these types of mechanisms are biased towards people who are articulate and who take the initiative to attend a public meeting. Thus, not only must citizens take time to become familiar with the plan or proposal, they must possess the self-confidence and speaking skills necessary to effectively present their views. Thus, while a public hearing allows citizens the opportunity to voice their opinions, seldom are representative views generated.

Public hearings or briefings can also be used to disseminate information. Dissemination occurs within a group setting, and is generally limited to the people who attend the meeting. However, governmental officials can receive immediate feedback concerning a certain plan or issue, and can explain any misunderstandings that might have occurred.

Public hearings or briefings can also be used to increase accessibility to governmental officials--although only in a limited way. Accessibility is generally limited to the public officials and citizens who attend the meeting. In addition, accessibility is usually temporary; that is, it is limited to the duration of the meeting and is dependent upon a public official granting accessibility by attending the meeting.

Involvement of citizens in governmental operations is also promoted by public hearings and briefings. However, generally this involvement is very limited and rarely has much impact on decisionmaking. This is because citizens generally react to governmental initiatives after a good deal of staff time has been expended developing the overall plan. The impact of this involvement is heavily dependent upon governmental willingness to accept and act upon the opinions and suggestions offered by citizens.

In addition, public hearings tend to encourage the involvement of people with strong views either for or against a certain issue. This may tend to increase the amount of conflict which occurs in the meeting.

Also, there is generally a good deal of repeat involvement in public hearings or briefings; that is, the same people or groups always participate. Unless an effort is made to encourage new people to become involved--either by giving the meeting greater publicity or by actively encouraging participation from groups who have not been represented--the number of people who will take advantage of opportunities to become involved will be limited.

And finally, public hearings could directly promote accountability. Officials are placed in the position of publicly answering questions about and providing justifications for a certain course of action. However, a public hearing in and of itself only promotes temporary accountability. Unless there is some follow-up procedure that is followed, the sense of accountability may only last the duration of the meeting. However, if a public official commits to following a course of action or commits to responding to citizen complaints or suggestions, and if this commitment is reported in the press or is ensured by an elected official, then the accountability dimension of public hearings becomes more lasting.

In summary, public hearings can affect directly upon the information, accessibility, involvement, and accountability functions of citizen participation--although for each, this impact is limited. A public hearing can collect and disseminate information on a range of topics--although its impact is limited to the people who attend a meeting. In addition, these mechanisms are biased towards people who are articulate and who have the initiative to attend a public meeting. Thus, the type of information collected is rarely representative of the views of the entire community. Public hearings promote accessibility, but are generally temporary and limited to a small number of officials for a small number of people. Involvement of citizens is also directly promoted by public hearings, although it is generally limited to a small number of people, and its impact is heavily dependent upon governmental willingness to act upon the information collected. And finally, public hearings and briefings directly promote accountability. However, unless follow-up procedures are established, feelings of accountability can be temporary.

The major benefits of this type of citizen participation mechanism are that it can be set up quickly with a minimum of expense and that it can potentially create a forum for debating a certain issue or proposed plan. Public hearings or briefings can be used in any size of city. If it is covered by the media, it can be used to draw attention to a particular issue. Generally, there are no formal restrictions on who can participate--although some people might be intimidated by speaking in a public meeting. However, public hearings can be an important mechanism if used in combination with other types of citizen participation mechanisms, simply because it allows anyone to participate.

The next section discusses issues involved in the implementation of public hearings.

C. Implementation and Major Design Issues

1. Introduction

A number of factors could affect the success of a public hearing or briefing. Generally, this type of citizen participation mechanism can be implemented quickly and requires much less effort than other mechanisms, such as mini-city halls or territorial groups. The major objective in implementation is to create a meeting situation which facilitates the input of citizens and makes it easy for them to participate. The three major stages of this process are preparing for the meeting, conducting the public hearing or briefing, and establishing follow-up procedures.

2. Pre-Meeting Preparations

A number of things can be done before the public meeting in order to encourage the participation of citizens and to make it easier for them to participate effectively.

First, sufficient attempts should be made to publicize the upcoming meeting. A variety of media should be used to promote public awareness of the purpose, time, and place of the meeting. One public notice in a newspaper is not adequate. Public officials might initiate a wide variety of activities. For example, articles could be placed in the newspaper--as well as stories on radio and television--providing background information on the topic of the upcoming meeting. In addition, officials might send out letters to groups and known interested citizens informing them of why and when the meeting is going to be held, and encouraging them to participate. If letters are sent out, care should be taken that a mailing list is developed that is not biased against any types of groups. In addition, the city might consider holding neighborhood meetings prior to the public hearing in order to increase general familiarity with the goals, constraints, and program elements of the subject of the public hearing. These prior meetings would give citizens the opportunity to organize their input and should make the hearings themselves more productive. Efforts to publicize the upcoming meeting are important not only because they encourage participation, but also because they indicate that government is sincere and interested in getting citizen reactions.

Second, easily understood written materials should be made available before the meeting. If government is interested in receiving considered, well-thought-out citizen reactions, written materials should be made available before the meetings. These materials should be short and well written. Accurate summaries of major plans or legislation should be available. In other words, if the purpose of the meeting is to discuss how the city should spend Community Development money, a summary of the purposes and restrictions of the act should be provided, not a copy of the legislation.

Third, citizens should be encouraged to prepare a written statement before the public hearing. This would encourage them to organize their thoughts. However, local officials should realize that the preparation of written comments might present a problem for some participants. Thus, written comments should not be a requirement for participation. In addition, the city might suggest public or independent resources which would assist the citizen or group in the preparation of written statements.

Fourth, citizens should know what is being asked of them. This is related to the three previous points. In informing people about the meeting and providing written materials, it should be clear what the government would like to know from the citizens. The purpose is not to restrict comments, but rather to help citizens focus on the important issues.

And finally, meeting time and place should allow convenient access. Meetings might be held on weekday evenings to enable more working people to attend. If the subject of the meeting specifically affects a certain area of town, the meeting might be held in that particular neighborhood. Wherever the meeting is held, it should be in a place that is easy to find and that offers sufficient parking and easy access to public transportation.

3. Conducting the Meeting

There are a number of considerations involved in conducting the meeting which could facilitate the participation of citizens. First, the meeting should be conducted at a point in the planning process in which there is still time to incorporate citizen comments. Often times citizens are not given very much time to respond to governmental requests, and they are asked to present their comments 2 weeks before a final plan is due. These are good indicators that a government is not interested in their views. By trying to get comments early in the planning process and by giving citizens adequate time to respond, officials can increase the credibility of the process and improve the quality of participation.

Second, officials should present a clear concise overview of the purpose of the meeting and the elements of the plan or program that is being reviewed. In addition to written materials, it is important that a good oral presentation be made to increase understanding of whatever is being proposed. Visuals, where appropriate, should be included in order to further clarify the subject of the meeting.

Third, nameplates should be used to identify public officials or government personnel attending the meeting. By using some type of identification for public officials, citizens know to whom they are speaking. This not only would make citizens more comfortable, but also facilitates access.

Fourth, the meeting should follow some logical procedure. For example, public officials might ask those in favor of a particular issue or program to speak first and those against to speak second. If the subject of the meeting does not lend itself to pro or con views--such as a public hearing requesting ideas for spending community development monies--the officials might have the citizens present their suggestions, and then write those views onto large sheets of paper at the front of the room.

After everyone has presented their suggestions, the group could then discuss them, clarifying any ambiguities that might exist. Following a logical process would help clarify the suggestions of citizens and promote the efficient use of time within the hearing. In addition, public officials should tape the hearings in order to be sure that valuable information is not lost.

4. Follow-up Procedures

After the hearing or meeting has been held, summaries should be prepared of the information presented. This could then be sent to those who participated.

An important question to the participants is the impact of their suggestions. Thus, it is very important that governmental officials document what suggestions were followed and--if appropriate--why the other suggestions were not incorporated. Demonstrating to participants that they had an impact is critical to maintaining the credibility of this type of mechanism.

In addition, in order to improve the quality and effectiveness of the participation and to increase the credibility of the process, citizens should be able to make comments on several different occasions. This allows officials to incorporate citizen suggestions and then to present it again to provide an opportunity for further comment. In addition, it allows people who were unable to attend a particular meeting an opportunity to still participate in the plan.

If a governmental unit follows these simple suggestions, it may be able to overcome some of the disadvantages of these types of citizen participation mechanisms. These suggestions will not only improve the quality of participation, but also demonstrate that the governmental unit is sincerely interested in citizen comments, thus increasing credibility.

D. Case Study

Public hearings concerning a highway extension project were held in one community in the west to meet the requirements for receiving Federal monies to be used in the project. The project involved building a cross-town highway extension to improve access between the downtown area and the airport, and the airport and those areas on the opposite side of town. A regional planning organization had generated three alternative routes for the highway extension, all of which were basically variations of the same route and all of which would run through residential areas.

Once these alternatives had been formulated, the regional organization held a series of public hearings in the areas most affected by the project. These hearings were publicized in a number of ways. Notices were sent to community organizations in these neighborhoods and public announcements were placed both in the local daily newspaper and the weekly neighborhood newspapers. In anticipation of a large turnout--the project was controversial and had already generated opposition from the neighborhoods--the public hearings were all scheduled for large high school auditoria or gymnasia. Detailed technical and summary reports outlining the project, and the process used to generate the alternative routes were available several weeks in advance of the public hearings and sent to anyone who requested one. In addition, copies were brought to the meetings for distribution.

In order to facilitate the operation of the meetings, extensive charts and graphics describing the alternative routes and the necessity for the project were prepared. In addition, an agenda was prepared for distribution at each meeting describing the purpose of the public hearing ("to receive citizen feedback on the proposed plan"); naming the people who would be running the meeting; explaining the project; and outlining the meetings basic format (a briefing followed by questions).

Considerable neighborhood opposition to the highway extension project erupted at each meeting. Residents were concerned that the neighborhoods would be ruined by the highway. At several of the meetings, suggestions spontaneously arose for the city to consider alternative methods for easing the access problems from the downtown area to the highway--such as improved mass transit systems.

Because of the strength of the opposition that was voiced at the hearings, the city and the regional planning organization reassessed the alternatives that had been suggested. Ultimately, a compromise was reached on a fourth alternative route that was less disruptive to the neighborhoods.

Several important points concerning public hearings can be made about this case study. In this particular example, government disseminated information to citizens about a major, proposed project and collected feedback from citizens concerning that project. Though it was only temporary, citizens had the opportunity to interact with government officials concerning the highway extension, and to hold these officials accountable for the plans they had formulated. In addition, as a result of the public hearings citizens were involved and had an impact on shaping the project plans that were finally followed.

Technically, the public hearings were all well run. Information was provided to participants ahead of time to facilitate participation in the meeting, and information was presented at the meeting in an effective manner. The feedback collected from citizens was carefully recorded and acted upon. In fact, many of the design suggestions presented in this submodule were incorporated in the hearings.

The major failure was that the public hearings were held virtually at the end of the planning period. Had hearings been held earlier, planning could have focused on those issues that were of concern to the citizens; that is, what was the social impact of the project going to be on citizens residing in the areas crossed by the highway, and how could negative social impacts be avoided or minimized.

E. Summary

The overall goal of this submodule is to promote understanding of how a public hearing or briefing could be used effectively as a citizen participation mechanism. After completing this submodule, the reader should be more aware of and be able to specify:

- how public hearings and briefings relate to the four functions of citizen participation; and
- major design considerations involved in implementing a public hearing or briefing.

A public hearing or briefing could potentially impact on the four functions of citizen participation. The accomplishments of public hearings or briefings will depend upon the number of meetings held, the number and type of participants, the amount of structure provided by staff, and the willingness of officials to use the information gained in the meeting. The following summarizes how public hearings or briefings relate to the four functions of citizen participation:

- Information--Information can be directly collected or disseminated. However, the mechanism is biased towards people who are articulate or who have the time and energy to attend a public meeting.
- Accessibility--Accessibility is generally limited to the public officials and for the citizens who attend the meeting. In addition, accessibility is usually temporary or limited to the duration of a meeting.
- Involvement--There is direct involvement for those citizens who attend the meetings. The impact of this involvement is heavily dependent upon governmental willingness to accept and act upon the opinions and suggestions offered by citizens.
- Accountability--Public hearings or briefings place officials in the position of publicly answering questions about and providing justifications for a certain course of action. The degree of accountability is dependent upon follow-up procedures.

The major objective in implementing a public hearing or briefing is to create a meeting situation which facilitates the input of citizens and makes it easy for them to participate. The three major stages of this process are premeeting preparation, conducting the public hearing or briefing, and establishing follow-up procedures. Important design statements which appear in the discussion of these factors are:

- Sufficient attempts should be made to publicize the upcoming meeting;

- Easily understood written materials should be made available before the meeting.
- Citizens should be encouraged--but not required--to prepare a written statement before the public hearing.
- Citizens should know what is being asked of them.
- Meeting time and place should allow convenient access.
- The meeting should be held at a point in the planning process in which there is still time to incorporate citizen comments.
- The meeting should include a clear, concise presentation with appropriate visuals.
- Nameplates should be used to identify public officials or government personnel attending the meeting.
- The meeting should follow some logical procedure.
- The results of the meeting should be documented.
- Citizens should be given several opportunities to participate.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION MECHANISMS:
TERRITORIAL GROUPS

The overall goal of this submodule is to familiarize the reader with the use of territorial groups as a form of citizen participation. After completing this submodule, the reader should be aware of and able to specify:

- different types of territorial groups that have formal connections to government;
- different citizen participation functions served by territorial groups; and
- major design issues involved in implementing territorial groups.

TERRITORIAL GROUPS

A. Introduction

Organizing citizens who live in a certain area of town into a group is a common type of citizen participation mechanism. Generally, these territorial groups are created to safeguard and represent neighborhood interests on matters that affect the development of the neighborhood and the welfare of neighborhood residents. This particular submodule deals with territorial groups--such as neighborhood commissions, associations, societies, and priority boards--that have some formal connection to local government.

What is meant by a formal connection to local government is a relationship in which government recognizes or accords legitimacy to a territorial group in some official way. This can be done legislatively or administratively. For example, area or neighborhood commissions in some cities are formally established by legislative acts. These groups have constitutions or charters that are approved by government and included in the City Code. In many cases, government selects the members who serve on these groups. A formal connection can also exist even if there is no legal basis for it. For example, a city department may organize an association of neighborhood groups and regularly solicit information from them--such as regularly receiving their suggestions for the capital improvements budget.

What is not dealt with in this submodule are the variety of territorial groups that have not been recognized by government in any way. These groups are voluntary associations that lobby with government. Their influence derives from their ability to pressure government. The issue here is not how the group originated--that is, either indigenously within the community or by a government initiative--but how it is tied into government. Some groups that arise in the community are closely tied to government; others are not. Here we are concerned with the former.

Territorial groups may focus on a wide range of issues. Some groups have targeted their activities to one or two issues--such as a neighborhood society concerned with the physical restoration or preservation of the neighborhood's historical resources. Others have a broad scope of interest and are concerned with a wide variety of issues--such as a neighborhood commission that reviews zoning changes and the issuance of liquor permits, makes recommendations to the local government concerning the spending of community development money and capital improvement funds, and assists residents with problems they may have with city departments.

Although territorial groups are primarily concerned with issues that relate to a particular section of the city, some cities have developed an integrated, city-wide system of neighborhood groups in which the structure, operation, and orientation of certain types of neighborhood groups are similar. However, in other communities territorial groups are not formally related to one another and may differ considerably in how they are organized.

Regardless of the form they take or how they evolve over time, territorial groups tend to become permanent citizen participation mechanisms once they have been created. They represent an enduring, common, and powerful form of citizen participation in many communities.

B. Functions

This section discusses the functions of territorial groups such as neighborhood commissions, societies, associations, and priority boards. What each type of territorial group could potentially accomplish with respect to citizen participation depends upon its specific purpose, the staff and technical resources it has available, its relation to local government, the support it receives from the community, and the quality and composition of its members. With these considerations in mind, territorial groups will be discussed in terms of how they relate to the four broad functions of citizen participation discussed in the first chapter; namely, the information, accessibility, involvement, and accountability functions. Then a more general discussion is provided of other functions they perform and of their advantages and disadvantages.

Territorial groups can collect and disseminate information. In fact, the primary purpose of many territorial groups is to collect information from neighborhood residents about matters that affect the neighborhood and to communicate this information to the appropriate government officials. For example, some area commissions hold regular meetings, public hearings, and public forums in which area problems and needs are discussed, pending legislation is reviewed, and proposed area developments are assessed. In this sense, the territorial group provides a forum within which neighborhood residents can express their opinions. If the territorial group is active and influential and the meetings it holds well run, then it not only facilitates the collection of information, but it also stimulates citizens to express their opinions. If the information that is generated is communicated to government officials, then an effective channel of communication between the citizen and government has been created.

There are certain advantages to this form of information collection. First, the neighborhood group aggregates the opinions of residents living in a certain part of town. The group provides a forum for citizens to express opinions and hopefully, to develop some sort of agreement concerning a certain issue. Second, citizens may feel more comfortable expressing their opinions at a neighborhood group meeting than at a meeting convened at city hall.

However, the representativeness of the information collected is usually influenced by the vitality of the area organization and the respect people in the community accord it. If the leadership of the group is weak and if few citizens either attend meetings or interact with group members, then the opinions expressed by the group may not be representative of the opinions of residents in the area.

Territorial groups can be used to disseminate information--although the number of people reached may be limited. It is possible for public officials to reach the group's leadership and those people who attend meetings or who receive communications--such as a newsletter--from the group. However, territorial groups can be an effective way to disseminate information because those who belong to the group or attend the meetings are likely to be interested in the welfare of their areas. Thus, they should be receptive to the information disseminated.

Territorial groups can help citizens within the area gain access to governmental officials. The activities of most territorial groups require interaction between group members and public officials to exchange information. In some instances this exchange is informal--such as where a group member establishes contact with a government official from whom he needs information. However, there may be a formal connection between the local government and the territorial group. For example, in some territorial organizations, government officials are formal members of the organization who participate as government representatives. In addition, the territorial group may be mandated to provide information feedback to government. Whether formal or informal, the opportunities for interaction exist and can be productive.

Most territorial groups provide opportunities for citizens to become directly involved in the governance of their neighborhoods or in matters that affect how their neighborhoods will grow and develop. The more active the organization is in such things as conducting assessments of the area's needs, and making recommendations to government about proposed developments or programs, the more intense the involvement. And in instances where actual powers are extended to the territorial group--as would be the case if the organization were given the power of architectural review--this involvement is even greater.

Territorial groups can also be effective mechanisms for making government more accountable. Citizens are able to join together and exert the influence of a group. Their primary objective is to safeguard the interests of the area and its residents. When this objective is formally recognized by government, territorial groups become effective accountability mechanisms by following governmental activities and programs that impact on their neighborhood.

In summary, territorial groups have the potential for being an effective citizen participation mechanism with distinct advantages for both the government and citizens. They can be used to promote the functions of information, accessibility, involvement, and accountability. These groups could advise government on matters ranging from the delivery of city services to the allocation of the general fund. In so doing, they help government be responsive to the needs of a neighborhood.

These groups also facilitate improved communications between government and citizens. Many citizens who otherwise might not communicate their needs, concerns, and opinions to government may do so through these mechanisms. The territorial organization can act as the area's advocate, and facilitate communication between citizens and government.

Finally, territorial groups are important involvement and recruitment mechanisms. Many citizens are encouraged to become involved in civic affairs through these mechanisms. They stimulate interest in local issues, increase citizen knowledge of local issues, and encourage citizens to assume a degree of responsibility over the governance of the neighborhoods in which they live. These mechanisms are also important sources of community leadership. Many community leaders have been recruited from and have acquired a great deal of experience in the arena of the territorial group.

Because territorial groups--such as neighborhood commissions, priority boards, societies, and associations--constitute a structured mechanism through which government and citizens can interact in a productive and nonadversarial manner, they help to produce increased citizen understanding of government and improved government responsiveness and accountability.

The next section of the submodule discusses the implementation of territorial groups and offers suggestions concerning major design issues.

C. Implementation and Major Design Issues

1. Clarity of Purpose

The clearer the purpose of the group, the greater the likelihood that the group will be productive. This design issue has been highlighted for a number of the mechanisms discussed in this module. While it may appear to be obvious that the objectives of any mechanism should be specific and unambiguous, the success of many citizen participation mechanisms has been adversely affected because the variety of people involved have different conceptions of what the mechanism will accomplish.

Territorial groups are designed as continuing mechanisms that perform a set of functions over time. With changes in membership, each new person has to become familiar with the purposes of the group. Thus, there is a need to have purposes clarified and documented to facilitate entrance into the group.

Purposes often associated with territorial groups include such things as the following:

- to formulate standards for the development, preservation, and enhancement of an area;
- to prepare and adopt a comprehensive plan to guide the development of an area;
- to review proposed developments and zoning changes to see if they are consistent with guidelines for the area's growth;
- to assess the needs of an area and its residents;
- to formulate recommendations for meeting those needs;
- to educate area residents and promote interest in and communication about the neighborhood;
- to review and evaluate pending legislation;
- to preserve the historical resources and character of the area;
- to facilitate the restoration or redevelopment of an area; and
- to promote social and economic development in the area.

2. Membership

A number of important design issues are associated with the selection of members of the territorial group. These include such considerations as the size of the group, the method of selection, the composition of the group, special membership qualifications, and the tenure of office.

The advantages of a small group are that members are easier to convene and meetings are easier to conduct. The advantages of a larger group are that more opportunities exist for involvement and that it is more likely that a variety of different viewpoints will be represented. In general, the size of the group will depend most on the functions or tasks the group has to perform and on other special considerations such as the stability and homogeneity of the neighborhood and the degree of community interest.

Group members can be selected in many different ways: appointed by government bodies, elected by area residents, chosen by civic or community organizations, or a combination of these. The advantage of electing representatives is that citizens are given direct control over who will represent them. Thus, the representative may be more likely to enjoy the confidence of the community and the decisions they arrive at may be more likely to be supported by the community. The disadvantage is that elections can be expensive to run, take time to set up, and turnout may be low.

If government appoints the members, it is easier to ensure good working relationships between the representatives and government officials. Care must be taken, however, to ensure that those picked represent the major segments of the area, have credibility in the community, and are willing to do the work required of group members. In many communities where the Mayor or Council appoint members to a territorial organization, a public official is asked to serve on the group. This helps to ensure the representation of the government's viewpoint, establishes direct linkages between the government and the territorial group, facilitates communication between the group and the government, and makes it possible to ensure that a certain balance is maintained in the group, and that it is not dominated by members representing a single interest or viewpoint.

In general, it is a good idea to stagger membership to ensure continuity and to limit the amount of time a single person can serve to expand leadership opportunities in the community, and to prevent any one person from assuming undue influence or power over the group.

Finally, some territorial organizations have residency requirements; that is, members must reside in the neighborhood to belong to the organization. Though this requirement does not seem unduly restrictive, it would exclude those who only work in the area from participating. Some organizations require that the membership include representatives of the business community, civic groups, property owners, tenants, and so on.

If members of a territorial organization are appointed and a balance of interests among members is considered desirable, then explicit criteria about what interests should be represented helps to ensure that balance. In addition, other groups within the community--such as a businessmen's association, or a tenants' association--can be asked to submit names for consideration.

3. Territorial Boundaries

Because each neighborhood commission or association serves or represents a distinct geographical area, agreement has to be reached concerning territorial boundaries. At times a neighborhood may be distinct and easy to identify because of a mix of socio-cultural, historical, and physical factors. For example, a neighborhood may be distinct because the homes all follow a certain architectural pattern. Or a neighborhood might be distinct because a certain social or ethnic group is identified with it. However, this is not always the case.

Whenever boundaries have to be decided, a number of questions should be considered.

- What is the primary purpose of determining boundaries? For example, is the primary purpose to help preserve the historical character of a community, or to achieve certain other values such as social homogeneity or heterogeneity?
- What is the impact of those boundaries likely to be? For example, will the process of formally creating neighborhood boundaries make it difficult for other groups or agencies that have different boundaries to accomplish their objectives?
- With how much ease or difficulty can these boundaries be changed, and upon what assumptions are the boundaries based? For example, were certain assumptions about the stability of certain population or housing trends important factors in determining boundaries, and are these assumptions valid or reasonable?

Whatever boundaries are selected, it is important that they are meaningful to the residents of the area and accepted by them.

4. Staffing and Support

Neighborhood organizations can be run very inexpensively. Commission members are rarely compensated for their service, and the most important considerations are that a location is available for commission meetings and that residents are informed of the meetings when appropriate. Space is usually available free of charge in community centers, schools, or religious institutions, and inexpensive means of publicizing meetings are available. In addition, the results of commission meetings and hearings can be communicated to the appropriate units of government informally and on an ad hoc basis. In other words, it is possible for local government to provide little support for and to maintain only weak linkages with certain public neighborhood organizations.

On the other hand, in some communities the neighborhood organizations receive both a great deal of support and attention from local government.

For example, government can provide the group with financial and clerical assistance to facilitate commission work, increase group productivity, and increase the capability of the group to communicate with area residents. With sufficient resources, neighborhood groups--especially general purpose ones--can assume major leadership roles in a neighborhood.

Some neighborhood commissions or groups that perform a broad set of functions are provided with technical staff assistance by government. This technical assistance can be used to assist the commission in designing and implementing major tasks such as a social services needs assessments, a land use study, or a neighborhood goals program, or to prepare formal reports or recommendations to submit to government. In short, government can increase the capacity of a neighborhood group or commission to render service to the community.

Finally, local government can provide training to the members of neighborhood organizations in areas related to the functions of the organization. The purpose of this would be to increase the capacity of the members to serve their communities and to function as responsible, informed members of the group.

The degree of staff support provided to a neighborhood organization depends primarily on two things: 1) the degree of interest the government has in making the organization productive and effective; and 2) the functions the organization was designed to serve. If staff support is provided, a decision must be made about who selects the staff. The advantages of having government select and provide staff are several: government selected staff are likely to be familiar with government programs, personnel, and operations; able to perform an effective liaison role between government and the neighborhood organization; and likely to be sensitive to government positions and concerns. The disadvantage is that government selected staff may be viewed with distrust by the organization members they are to assist.

On the other hand, if the organization has the power to select its own staff, government loses control over the quality and activity of the staff. In the last analysis, the quality of the staff is the most important consideration. If trust of government is a problem, then allowing the group to select its own staff may have important symbolic importance.

A middle ground is to allow both government and the organization to have an impact on staff selection. This can be done in many ways. For example, government may set qualifications that staff members must meet, but the organization determines who is selected.

5. Maintaining Community Interest and Organizational Strength and Productivity

Any territorial group faces two major problems: 1) how to maintain community interest; and 2) how to maintain the organization's strength. There are a number of things that can be done to try and prevent these problems from becoming serious. First, the clearer the functions to be performed by the organization, the less likely the organization will founder. This is, of course, easier to accomplish in special purpose territorial groups than in general purpose ones. Consequently, an effort must constantly be made in general purpose groups to specify goals clearly and to convert those goals into tasks or functions.

Second, care must be taken to design effective communications with area residents, and to interest area residents in the work of the organization that represents them. This can be done through the use of newsletters, public meetings, special speakers, and so on.

Third, high quality staff support helps to ensure that the organization will be productive. Staff can be used to perform many administrative functions, thus enabling organization members to spend a larger percentage of their time on substantive matters and concerns than they otherwise would be able to.

6. Legal Constraints

Local government officials should recognize that legal barriers may exist to devolving political power to neighborhood organizations. City charters may not permit the devolution of power to neighborhoods to the extent that they can legislate their own standards. Rather, neighborhoods may be restricted in their power to performing an advisory function and in adjudicating standards--as is frequently the case with restoration commissions--legislated by the municipality.

In addition, legal constraints may prevent group members from being elected. The city attorney in one city ruled that commission members who were formerly elected had to be appointed by the mayor. This does not have to prevent elections; it may only mean that the election results serve as recommendations to the mayor who then makes appointments to the commission. Thus, legal questions may be involved in the creation and operation of governmentally sanctioned territorial groups, and these should be examined.

D. Case Study

This section discusses the neighborhood priority board system of Dayton, Ohio. Dayton's neighborhood priority boards represent an integrated and a governmentally recognized and supported system of general purpose area commissions. These commissions perform certain governmental administrative functions for and in cooperation with local government. They have been chosen for discussion here because of their longevity and because of the effort that has gone into their development.

The priority board system was originally established in 1965 as a mechanism for helping to decide how Planned Variations money should be allocated. During the early years of their operation, the budget allocation powers of the priority boards were restricted to Planned Variations money. In recent years, however, the functions performed by the priority boards and their influence on local government has grown continuously.

Now, for example, the priority boards have become full partners in the budget making process. They make recommendations on the total city budget, and this process is formally integrated into the budget making cycle. In the past, as many as 85 percent of the recommendations made by the priority boards have been approved by the administration and city commission.

As part of this budget making function, the priority boards have also become involved in monitoring and evaluating programs. This process is both informal--residents provide feedback to board members regarding city programs and services--and formal--members systematically evaluate programs. Priority boards have also been used for a variety of other things such as helping to conduct a needs assessment, to establish city-wide and neighborhood goals, and even to provide services to residents in time of crisis. In short, they are well integrated into government, perform a variety of functional tasks, and are used, trusted, and known by community residents. The priority boards have evolved into a very effective linkage mechanism between area residents and government.

In Dayton's priority board system priority board members are elected on a neighborhood basis for fixed terms. Approximately 30 priority board members are elected to serve on each of the six boards that have been established. Each area is divided into precincts with elections operated and paid for by the city. Voter turnout for priority board elections has not been very high, and the elections themselves have been quite costly--approximately $20,000-25,000 for a full, city-wide election. To reduce costs and increase voting, Dayton has recently experimented with mail ballots; and in recent elections, voting rates were as high as 40 percent in the priority board neighborhoods where the mail ballot system was used.

Dayton's neighborhood priority boards have historically been provided with substantial financial and staff assistance by city government--an indication of the degree to which the priority boards are integrated into local government and supported by it. A neighborhood site office is maintained in each priority board area, and the site office is staffed by city employees. Each priority board area benefits from the services of a site office staff that usually includes an economic development planner, a social services planner, and a neighborhood coordinator. Though the staff enjoy some initiative and autonomy, they have to be responsive to the needs of the community and priority board members. Because of their proximity to and daily involvement with neighborhood residents and priority board members, this responsiveness is almost ensured. The site offices and their staff are not inexpensive to maintain. Each neighborhood site office costs approximately $80,000-100,000 to operate. Citizens often use priority board members as ombudsmen and the site offices as community centers. In the recent energy crisis, the priority boards operated in cooperation with Dayton's Ombudsman to deliver emergency services to residents. The community and the city were able to capitalize on the existence of the priority board structure and on citizens' familiarity with the priority boards to improve emergency response capability.

In recent years priority boards have been more closely and formally linked with government officials and more fully integrated into the governmental process through the creation of Administrative Councils. Administrative Councils are convenings in which middle management government personnel, directly involved in service delivery, meet monthly with priority board members. The Administrative Councils facilitate citizen access to government; and provide opportunities for government personnel in middle management positions to meet with, receive feedback from, and become sensitized to the needs and perceptions of citizens. The result has been the development of close ties and effective working relationships between governmental personnel and citizens in an environment that is conducive to broad participation in problem identification and solution. Since the Administrative Councils are continuous and regular in their operation, adversarial relationships between citizens and government personnel rarely arise as they frequently do when citizens and government personnel interact on an ad hoc basis.

Finally, local government has made major investments in training priority board members. Priority board members have been provided with the opportunity to attend seminars and training programs given by local universities and corporations. The result has been that the priority board members have become more capable of serving their communities and functioning responsibly as elected community representatives. Given the great influence that the priority boards have in the budget making process, this investment in training appears to be both prudent and appropriate.

A number of things about Dayton's Neighborhood Priority Board system are noteworthy. Though they have changed over the years, the functions and purposes of the Priority Board system have been quite clear. Periodically, these functions and purposes have been assessed and modified in light of the city's needs and its overall citizen participation strategy. In short, a great deal of thought has gone into designing the priority board system--both with respect to the functions they serve and how they are operated.

From the outset, local government has supported and maintained good relationships with the priority boards. Though there have been periods when problems have existed, fundamental acceptance of the appropriateness and importance of the priority boards has not been challenged. High administrative support has also helped to overcome whatever fears and resistance have existed at other levels of local government. In addition, the staff aides that have served the priority boards have been well qualified, hard working, responsive to the needs of the areas they serve, and sensitive to the political nature of the role they play.

A major commitment has been made to make the priority board system work and to integrate it effectively into the operation of government. The system reflects over a decade of evolution in which a constant effort has been made to refine and improve its design and operation.

At one point in the history of Dayton's neighborhood priority boards it was believed by some that the boards served to displace or weaken traditional forms and sources of neighborhood leadership. This no longer appears to be a major problem, however, as established community organizations now put forward candidates for priority board elections. In addition, the election process provides increased opportunities for individuals in the community--including those who for a variety of reasons historically have not participated--to participate. In addition, the priority board system has served to develop a broad base of knowledgeable and involved citizens. The scale of participation reflected in the priority board system is quite large.

The priority board areas are fairly large and often encompass many smaller neighborhoods. An effort was made, however, to preserve the territorial integrity of smaller neighborhoods and to create boundaries that were meaningful to and could be accepted by citizens.

In summary, Dayton's neighborhood priority board system provides an example of a community that has made a major commitment to citizen participation in the form of a system of general purpose, territorial organizations. Continuous attention has been devoted to the design and implementation of this citizen participation mechanism.

E. Summary

The overall goal of this submodule is to familiarize the reader with the use of territorial groups as a form of citizen participation. After completing this submodule, the reader should be aware of and able to specify:

- different types of territorial groups that have formal connections to government;
- different citizen participation functions served by territorial groups; and
- major design issues involved in implementing territorial groups.

One of the striking characteristics of many cities is the amount of diversity that exists not only in physical characteristics and resources of different geographical areas within the city, but also in the characteristics, needs, and values of the citizens residing in those areas. Where this diversity is great and it is possible to identify genuinely distinct areas or neighborhoods within a city, territorial groups constitute potentially valuable citizen participation mechanisms. Territorial groups include those area organizations that are created to safeguard and represent area interests on matters that relate to neighborhood development and that impact on the welfare of neighborhood residents.

Territorial groups have been distinguished in a number of ways. First, a distinction can be made between those that do and those that do not have a formal connection with government. Among the former would be included organizations the members of which are appointed by elected officials, organizations the members of which are selected in elections that are government funded, organizations that receive government support, and organizations that regularly perform some administrative government function such as reviewing proposed area developments.

Another distinction has to do with the scope of activities performed by the organization; and here is the distinction between special purpose organizations and general purpose organizations. An example of the former might include a historical society the special purpose of which is to preserve the historical resources of an area. An example of the latter might include a neighborhood commission the general purpose of which is to promote the development of an area in ways that are consistent with the values of the residents.

The final distinction is between those territorial organizations that operate independently of other territorial organizations, and those that perform certain functions in collaboration with other territorial organizations and are formally linked to them in some system of neighborhood or area groups.

Territorial groups can potentially impact on four functions of citizen participation. What an individual territorial group can accomplish is dependent upon its specific purpose, the staff and technical resources it has available, its relationship to local government, the support it receives from the community, and the quality and composition of its members. The following provides a general summary of how territorial groups relate to the four functions of citizen participation.

- Information--Territorial groups can be used both to collect information from and disseminate information to area residents. The group can be used to aggregate or represent the opinions of residents and the information that is collected used in planning, decisionmaking, and operations. Territorial groups can also disseminate information from government back to citizens.

- Accessibility--If they are formally connected to government, territorial groups constitute a channel of communication between citizens and government officials. In this respect they provide opportunities for citizens to interact with government, but generally only in those areas with which the organization was created to deal.

- Involvement--By giving citizens direct control or influence over matters that affect their well being, territorial groups help to involve people in government. This helps to reduce citizen alienation, and develop a more responsible and capable citizenry.

- Accountability--Because territorial groups tend to increase the information that citizens have about government activities, and because they involve citizens in government and improve their access to it. territorial groups can be effective in promoting government accountability.

Territorial organizations can only be effective citizen participation mechanisms if they are carefully designed and implemented. Important design issues include:

- Relationship With Local Government--Good working relationships and formal linkages between a territorial group and government help to make this mechanism effective as a citizen participation mechanism and reduce the likelihood of unproductive conflicts arising.

- Clarity of Purpose--The purposes of a territorial group can vary greatly. Whatever the purpose is, it should be clearly specified to facilitate the work of the members and to prevent misunderstandings or ambiguities from arising.

- Membership--The quality of the members of the territorial group will have a major bearing on the success of the group. The method of selecting members that is adopted should take into consideration such factors as ensuring that the members have the qualifications to perform the tasks that are required of them, yet enjoy the confidence and respect of area residents.

- Territorial Boundaries--Many neighborhoods have strong identities. In creating territorial groups, care should be given to preserving the integrity of those neighborhoods.

- Staffing and Support--Though volunteer citizen representatives are capable of accomplishing much in a well designed and operated territorial group, their capabilities are enhanced with support. Support can be provided in the form of staff, finances, or training.

- Maintaining Interest and Productivity--In any continuing, voluntary organization, interest and productivity can be difficult to maintain over time. Factors such as clarity of purpose and quality of staff and members will have a major impact on the ability of a territorial group to become and remain vital.

- Legal Constraints--Because the creation of territorial groups occasionally involves the devolution of power, the legal questions associated with different forms of creating and operating these groups should be considered.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION MECHANISMS:
FUNCTIONAL CONTINUING MECHANISMS

The overall goal of this submodule is to familiarize the reader with the use of functionally-oriented, continuing mechanisms as a form of citizen participation. After completing this submodule, the reader should be aware of and able to specify:

- different types of functionally-oriented, continuing mechanisms;
- different citizen participation functions served by these mechanisms; and
- major design issues involved in implementing functionally-oriented continuing mechanisms.

FUNCTIONAL CONTINUING MECHANISMS

A. Introduction

A common and traditional form of citizen participation is having citizens serve on functionally-oriented, continuing government bodies such as governmental commissions, committees, boards, and authorities. Examples are planning or development commissions, license appeals boards, boards of zoning adjustments or appeals, boards of examiners, airport commissions, transit authorities, boards of health, and community relations committees.

A number of these bodies exist in most communities. As the responsibilities and size of local government have expanded, citizens are increasingly called upon to assist government by performing a variety of review, advisory, and administrative duties.

Most of the mechanisms discussed in this submodule typically involve from 3 to 30 citizens. All of these groups are formal, continuing structures established to perform tasks that arise regularly or intermittently. All involve citizens in official, public service roles. They differ from territorial groups in that they are primarily concerned with functional areas rather than with preserving or promoting the interests of a specific geographical area within a larger community.

Many of these bodies are involved in the administration of specific legislation of a municipality. Others are established as authorities or development corporations to implement and manage public facilities or specific development projects. Still others are created to review procedures and make recommendations to decisionmakers. In short, these bodies can perform a variety of functions including arbitration, investigation, planning, administration, advisory, and regulation.

B. Functions

This section discusses the functions of continuing, functionally-oriented governmental commissions, committees, boards, and authorities. What each could accomplish with respect to citizen participation depends upon its specific purpose, the staff and technical resources it has available, the quality and composition of its members, and its relationship to local government. With these considerations in mind, functional groups will be discussed in terms of how they relate to the four broad functions of citizen participation discussed in the first module: that is, the information, accessibility, involvement, and accountability functions.

Functional groups can be used to collect information. The amount of information collected from participants depends on the purpose of the mechanism. Those mechanisms concerned with planning or investigation will collect more information than mechanisms primarily designed for administration. For example, a regional, criminal justice planning council that researches, studies, and discusses issues related to the coordination of regional law enforcement activities will collect more information from participants than a board of examiners that certifies applicants for licenses as electrical contractors. In short, the use of these mechanisms to collect information from participants varies depending on purposes.

In addition, if information is collected, it is limited to the small number of people belonging to the functional group and to the particular substantive area that is the focus of the group. Generally, professional and technical membership requirements exist for many of these groups. For example, members of a board of health are usually all professionally involved in health care. Thus, these groups are usually biased towards a particular type of participant. Consequently, while functional groups are useful for some information purposes--such as pooling the talent and knowledge of elites in the community--seldom does one get representative views.

These groups are all involved in disseminating information to members because they often need to know a good deal to participate effectively. However, the information disseminated is usually confined to a particular substantive area and to the members of the functional group.

Functional groups provide direct access on a continual basis for members of the group. However, for any one group, this access is limited to officials involved in a particular substantive area and to the members of the functional group.

Functional groups also provide those who serve on them with a genuine opportunity to become involved in governmental affairs. For any one group, the number of people who could be involved is quite limited. However, if a large number of functional groups exist in the community, the opportunities for involvement would be expanded and would be extended to many areas of governmental activity. Since these groups are functionally-oriented, the tasks members perform are directly related to these functions and thus are quite specific. This could provide members with a real feeling of involvement.

The opportunities for involvement provided by these groups could be beneficial. These groups provide an excellent training ground for those who are members. While many of those who serve are successful individuals, they may not have been actively involved in public affairs. Thus, service in this capacity stimulates among citizen participants an interest in public affairs. Consequently, these groups could help recruit new community leadership.

Functional groups can also promote public accountability although the degree of accountability depends on the activities of the group. Those groups that perform purely administrative functions, such as the examination and certification of plumbers, are not likely to influence public accountability in any major way. However, these groups do contribute to the maintenance of standards deemed to be in the public interest.

Those groups that perform investigative, planning, regulatory, and advisory functions can have a major impact on public accountability. They monitor and review a broad range of government activities and help to ensure that these activities are performed in the public interest. They promote accountability by subjecting the actions of government agencies and personnel to public scrutiny. This is especially true of those groups that release reports and recommendations publicly.

These mechanisms are usually established to lend expertise, energy, and impartiality to various government activities. This type of citizen involvement could help to improve government efficiency and effectiveness. For example, in a technical advisory committee citizens advise, supply information, and make recommendations to policymakers concerning an issue area in which the citizens possess special expertise. Members can supplement, validate, or balance expert information that is available from other sources. In addition, they might provide a perspective concerning the impact of a proposed development that is different from either the developer or officials in the government's planning department. Such a committee may also provide expertise that otherwise is not available or is very costly.

The success of any of these mechanisms in promoting the four citizen participation functions depends in large part upon how the mechanism is designed and implemented. The following section examines design and implementation issues that are likely to influence the success or failure of these mechanisms.

C. Implementation and Major Design Issues

1. Introduction

Many factors need to be considered in implementing a functional continuing group. A functional group is similar to a task force or blue ribbon committee--discussed in an earlier submodule--in that it is a type of convening, although permanent rather than temporary. Thus, many of the issues discussed in the submodule on task forces and blue ribbon committees are also pertinent to functional groups. These primarily concern the number of considerations involved in running a meeting. The reader should refer back to that previous discussion for a more complete elaboration of these issues.

The discussion in this section will focus on the following major design issues:

- clarity of purpose;
- membership; and
- staffing and organization.

First, it is important that the purpose or scope of activities of the functional group is carefully outlined, and the relationship to local government activities carefully delineated. This will not only ensure that the group is effective as a citizen participation mechanism, but also facilitate coordination with other groups.

In addition, there are a number of issues related to membership that need to be addressed. Major issues are the criteria developed for selection and the method of selection. The success of this type of mechanism is heavily influenced by the quality of people who participate.

And finally, another important design issue is the quality of staff work. Generally, group members serve as volunteers without compensation. If the group has major functions to perform, such as investigation, planning, or research, then staff assistance will be an important determinent of the group's effectiveness.

The next few sections discuss each of these major design considerations in detail.

2. Purpose

An earlier section of this submodule listed alternative purposes that continuing, functionally-oriented mechanisms can serve. These included such things as arbitration, investigation, planning, administration advisory, and regulation. For example, a civil service commission might act as an arbitrator in hearing appeals concerning civil service provisions and rules. A consumer protection commission might conduct investigations and then recommend legislation designed to correct abuses. A regional planning commission may oversee area-wide planning in such areas as transportation, land use, and social services. An electrical contractors' examining board may administer legislation governing the issuance of licenses to electrical contractors. An emergency medical services advisory council might review and make recommendations regarding the policies, procedures, and operation of an emergency medical services system. And finally, a building commission, among other purposes, may engage in regulation by supervising and overseeing projects according to the provisions of the building code.

Functional groups have a number of advantages. They institutionalize citizen involvement in government affairs across a broad range of functional areas, and in a variety of ways. They often provide additional expertise and impartiality to the execution of government functions. They ensure some degree of citizen involvement and subject the operations of government to public scrutiny. In short, these mechanisms can promote citizen participation in the areas of information, accessibility, involvement, and accountability.

If this is to occur, however, the purposes of these mechanisms must be consciously designed to promote these functions. One way to do this is with the charter or mandate that guides the operation of these groups. As new mechanisms are created or existing mechanisms restructured, care must be taken to articulate missions or goals that are related to the four citizen participation functions. For example, a board of examiners could be empowered not only to examine and certify applicants for licenses, but also to conduct investigations based on complaints. Thus, in this way the mechanism would perform more adequately the information function of citizen participation.

In developing functional groups, a public official should be aware of potential problems. If the purposes of the group are too broad or vague, it may lack a sense of direction and get involved in activities which interfere with other government operations. Consequently, the indepedence given these groups must be related to their purpose in order to avoid creating another layer of government organization that is difficult to control and may itself not be accountable to the public.

The purpose of these mechanisms also relates to whether or not they should be designed as continuing structures. Continuing structures are appropriate when they perform tasks that arise regularly or intermittently. In short, a continuing structure should not be created if its purpose is not continuing.

3. Membership

Another important design consideration concerns the membership of functional groups. The two major issues involved are the selection, criteria, and the method of selection.

Because functional groups generally perform activities of a technical nature, many boards, commissions, authorities, and committees require--either formally or informally--that members have certain professional or technical qualifications. Generally, these requirements are very broad and require that a member have a certain type of degree (such as a degree in medicine or architecture) or belong to a certain institution (such as a member of bar association or regional planning organization). In other cases, there are not formal requirements concerning the qualifications of members, although traditionally only certain types of people have participated. Both of these situations restrict the types of people who can become involved in functional groups. When the function performed by the group requires special expertise, selection requirements may be appropriate. However, they should not be used simply to exclude the participation of certain groups. In addition, an effort should be made to balance expert and nonexpert membership where this is likely to serve the public interest. In some functional groups, stringent selection criteria only act as a barrier to introducing different perspectives and innovative or challenging ideas. In short, selection criteria can be used to keep a group closed just as they can be used to ensure that the expertise the group requires to perform its duties well is available.

Participants in functional groups are usually appointed. This method of selection is far less cumbersome than election and can easily accommodate any special requirements that might exist on the qualifications of members. However, if appointments are made as a way to recognize or reward the political contributions of individuals, the citizen participation dimension of these mechanisms will usually suffer. Thus, one disadvantage of appointments is that it can be abused easily. This can be avoided somewhat if nominations to the functional groups are open and if the local officials consciously try to solicit the contributions of different types of people. If citizen participation is a concern of governmental officials, then an effort should be made to ensure a balance on the group regardless of the selection method or criteria that are used.

4. Staffing and Organization

Those continuing mechanisms that perform fairly routine administrative functions, such as processing applications for licenses according to a set of complete and easily applied guidelines, probably require little staff assistance. As long as procedures and forms used by the group are well designed, its operation is not likely to suffer from the absence of staff.

The same condition does not necessarily hold, however, for those continuing mechanisms that are involved in investigation, planning, or research. Group members normally serve as volunteers without compensation and are limited in the amount of time they can devote to the group. If the group has major functions to perform, then staff assistance may be necessary.

If staff assistance is provided, then a decision needs to be made about whether the staff is permanent or temporary, or whether the group can have access to government personnel as required. The decision about staff mechanisms of this type must be made in relation to the purposes of a particular mechanism. In a community where thirty or more of these mechanisms might exist, the staffing of them could prove to be very costly.

Finally, in-service training to help members become more knowledgeable about their roles and responsibilities and more proficient in performing their duties may be appropriate. Such training can be used to supplement the charters, forms, procedures, and guidelines that help to give direction to the operation of the group.

D. Case Studies

1. The Board of Health consists of six members, all of whom are either doctors or dentists, with one exception. For the first time in its history, a nurse was appointed by the Mayor--at the urging of the professional nursing association--to serve on the Board. This appointment set a new precedent regarding who was qualified to serve on the Board and ended the Board's total domination by the doctors and dentists. However, some Board members have had difficulty accepting a nurse as a co-equal. The nurse, a confident and capable woman, tends to aggravate the problem because she has pressed forcefully for the Board to take a more aggressive posture with respect to a number of public health issues.

Though it relies heavily on the professionals in the Health Department both to institute and carry out policy, the Board possesses considerable power and has been vested with "all powers and duties...they deem necessary and proper to protect, preserve, and safeguard the public health." In general, excellent relationships have existed between the Board and the Health Department. The Board has been supportive of the Health Commissioner and the Commissioner has been responsive to ideas and initiatives suggested by the Board.

Over the years, the Board has increasingly focused its energies on setting broad directions for the Health Department rather than on overseeing internal operations. For example, the Board has taken a very active role in pressing for new health code regulations affecting public facilities, and for the institution of new programs targeted at the detection, prevention, and cure of communicable diseases--including public education programs and the expansion of treatment and testing centers. In addition, one member who is a cardiologist and is active in the Heart Association, has worked very hard to help the Commissioner set up cooperative programs with the Heart Association and the Red Cross. The Board has also been very helpful to the Commissioner in securing increases to the Health Department budget in order to carry out these new programs and initiatives.

This brief case study helps to illustrate a number of important points. First, the membership of the Board was a sensitive issue--at least within the Board. Though the introduction of a nurse has not impaired the operation of the Board, it has created potentially volatile relationships among members. Thus, the appointment of members to a continuing mechanism is both a sensitive and an important task.

Second, the Board has made genuine contributions to the effective administration of public health in the community. They have been the driving force behind the introduction of a number of new programs. They have supported Health Department efforts both with the public and with the city council.

Third, though they have no staff assigned specifically to them, the Board has good working relationships with the Health Department, and they are able to get whatever staff assistance they require. Most of the time, they serve in an advisory capacity. Occasionally, they get intimately involved in investigations and the formulation of recommendations as they did after the swine flu vaccine program when certain problems with the city's public health emergency response system surfaced.

2. Shortly after he was elected to office, the Mayor of one midsize city established a Police-Community Relations Committee to improve relations between the police and certain segments of the community. This was done in response to a situation that threatened to disrupt city services and consume the energies of his administration.

For years, certain segments of the black community had been dissatisfied with the police. This dissatisfaction stemmed from a number of factors. First, the belief was widespread in the black community that police discriminated against blacks and gave preferential treatment to whites. Second, the belief also existed that the police withheld services or provided disproportionately fewer services to predominantly black areas of town. Finally, some community activists claimed that there were far too few blacks on the police force. Periodically, incidents would occur that made the situation even worse. Most of these involved accusations of police brutality or the use of excessive force against blacks.

The administration tried to remain neutral, a path that was favored neither by the police or by blacks. The police have a very powerful Policemen's Benevolent Association and this Association kept pressuring the administration to rebuke the black community's claims, support the police, and assert that matters regarding police conduct and hiring practices were internal, professional, police matters.

After a black youth was shot by a police officer, a major campaign was mounted in the press and by certain segments of the community to institute a civilian review board. In response, the police threatened a work slowdown. By personal mediation, the Mayor was able to get both those for and against the civilian review board to agree to institute a continuing police community relations committee. The major function of this committee would be to recommend actions and provide advice for improving police-community relations. The committee's role was advisory; it had no binding power.

Though the Mayor appointed members to the committee, an agreement was reached and formalized about selection criteria and membership composition. The committee was to contain representatives from the following groups: the City's Department of Public Safety, the Policemen's Benevolent Association, the Civil Liberties Union, the clergy, the black community, the Office of the Mayor, United Way, the Bar Association, the League of Women Voters, the editor of the black newspaper, and several other community organizations.

In taking this action, the Mayor was guided by a number of considerations. Relations between the police and certain segments of the community were seriously strained, and this was threatening to spill over into other areas of community-government relations. The Mayor concluded that something had to be done to reverse the situation, and that a police-community relations committee should be created to devise procedures and policies for improving community-government relations, repair whatever damage had been done to the government's image, reestablish communications between the government and those segments of the community with whom communications had broken down, rebuild public trust in government, and enhance the government's credibility.

Though he considered appointing a "blue ribbon" task force to investigate the situation and issue a report and recommendations, he decided that a continuing mechanism would have more credibility than a task force and that the situation warranted the creation of a permanent mechanism.

The decision to create a continuing mechanism of this type was not easily made. The mayor was aware that in a highly charged atmosphere the potential existed for the mechanism to become politicized and its members destructively adversarial. In addition, the very existence of the mechanism threatened the police and was resisted by them. Nonetheless, the advantages seemed to outweigh the disadvantages. The group could be used to appraise and provide advice regarding police policies, programs, and procedures. The committee could serve as a responsible forum within which grievances could be aired and discussed. The committee could help to promote the acceptance of changes by both citizens and government officials. To minimize the likelihood that the committee would turn out to be counterproductive, great care was taken to outline completely and clearly the following types of things: the purpose of the committee, the rights and responsibilities of members, rules of procedures for meetings, and so on.

In this particular instance the establishment of a continuing police-community relations committee appears to have been successful. The committee was instrumental in helping to avert a crisis, in formulating recommendations that were accepted by all segments of the community, in maintaining channels of communication between government and the black community, and in improving public trust in the government and the police. New patrolling programs were devised for high crime neighborhoods; a program was devised and a concerted effort made to recruit more qualified black police officers; and new internal police procedures were devised to handle citizen grievances.

Once the crisis was averted and good relations between the black community and government restored, the committee got involved in other efforts. These included such things as crime prevention programs, and the integration of certain law enforcement activities with activities in other criminal justice related areas such as the correctional system and the courts.

Several important points from this case study should be emphasized. The decision to create a new functionally-oriented continuing mechanism was not easily made. In this particular example, it was a very sensitive issue with political ramifications. Because of this, great care was devoted to the design of the mechanism and the selection of members. This mechanism promoted citizen participation in some important ways: it was used both to collect information from the community and disseminate information to the community; it provided a way for community representatives to interact with government officials regularly about an issue of major public concern; it gave a number of citizens the opportunity to become directly involved in and to impact upon government affairs; and it helped to make a major government agency more responsive to citizen needs.

E. Summary

The overall goal of this submodule is to familiarize the reader with the use of functionally-oriented, continuing mechanisms as a form of citizen participation. After completing this submodule, the reader should be aware of and able to specify:

- different types of functionally-oriented, continuing mechanisms;
- different citizen participation functions served by these mechanisms; and
- major design issues involved in implementing functionally-oriented continuing mechanisms.

Functionally-oriented, continuing government bodies, such as governmental commissions, boards, committees, and authorities, are a common and traditional form of citizen participation used to lend expertise, energy, and impartiality to various government functions. They differ from territorial groups in that they are concerned primarily with functional areas of concern and not primarily with preserving or promoting the interests of a specific geographical area within a community.

These types of mechanisms perform a variety of functions including such things as arbitration, investigation, planning, administration, advisory, and regulation.

Functionally-oriented, continuing government bodies can potentially impact on the four functions of citizen participation. What an individual mechanism can accomplish is dependent on the specific function it is designed to serve, how it is integrated into the governmental process, the quality of its members, and how it is staffed and organized. The following provides a general summary of how functionally-oriented continuing mechanisms relate to the four functions of citizen participation.

- Information--Those continuing, functionally-oriented mechanisms that discharge planning or investigation functions will engage in more information collection than mechanisms that discharge primarily administrative functions such as issuing licenses. Though they engage in information collection, government itself is often the prime recipient of information from these groups--either in the form of reports, studies, or recommendations.
- Accessibility--Functionally-oriented, continuing mechanisms provide citizens with the opportunity to interact with government across a broad range of government activities. However, this access is usually limited to those people who serve on these groups.

- Involvement--Opportunities to get directly involved in government are provided by these mechanisms. Citizens can participate directly in a broad range of governmental affairs. Since the involvement is usually task oriented, those who participate usually feel as though their involvement is restricted to those who are members of these mechanisms. Finally, these mechanisms often serve as a channel for recruiting citizens to become involved in other ways in public affairs.

- Accountability--The degree to which these types of mechanisms make officials answerable to citizens and more responsive to them varies greatly. The most important factor that affects accountability is the overall purpose of the mechanism. Those that perform investigative, planning, regulatory, and advisory functions can promote government accountability by monitoring and appraising government programs, policies, and procedures.

As is the case with any citizen participation mechanism, if they are to operate successfully, continuing, functionally-oriented government bodies must be carefully designed and implemented. In this submodule a number of important design issues have been discussed. These include:

- Purpose--The purpose of a particular mechanism must be carefully thought out and communicated to those who are charged with responsibility for accomplishing it. Whatever guidelines that exist for governing the operation of the group must be clearly and completely specified and closely related to the stated purposes.

- Membership--Members of continuing, functionally-oriented government bodies are usually appointed. Care must be given to deciding who makes the appointments (the Mayor, the Council, both, or others) and what special criteria, such as professional or technical qualifications, must citizens meet to qualify for membership on these groups. Regardless of the selection methods and selection criteria, if citizen participation is a concern of a city government, then an effort should be made to ensure a balance on the group and not to use appointments as political rewards.

- Staffing and Organization--In any given community, many groups of the type discussed in this submodule may exist. The staffing of all of these groups could be very expensive and may not be necessary. The decision of staff should be closely related to function or purpose. In addition, it may be equally effective and less expensive to provide these bodies with access to government resources and staff on an "as-required" basis as opposed to providing separate staff and resources for them. Finally, well-designed forms and procedures and clearly specified functions help to minimize the need for staff.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION MECHANISMS: DECENTRALIZATION

The overall goal of this submodule is to familiarize the reader with the use of decentralization as a form of citizen participation. After completing this submodule, the reader should be aware of and be able to specify:

- different types of neighborhood facilities;
- different functions of neighborhood facilities;
- major design issues involved in implementing a neighborhood facility; and
- arguments for and against political decentralization.

DECENTRALIZATION

A. Introduction

This submodule covers a class of citizen participation mechanisms that involve the physical decentralization of governmental delivery systems. These mechanisms are particularly appropriate for medium and large sized cities. While other mechanisms have involved some type of decentralization--i.e., the transfer of power from a centralized authority to others--the emphasis in this class of mechanisms is on the physical decentralization.

Two types of physical decentralization--administrative and political--can be distinguished in terms of the degree of decisionmaking power that is transferred to a neighborhood facility. Administrative decentralization refers to the delegation of responsibility for the delivery of services from a central governmental facility to a neighborhood facility. Examples of these facilities would include branch service facilities, multi-service centers, and mini-city halls. The basic purpose of this type of decentralization is to improve the central government's communication with citizens in certain areas by providing them with easily accessible facilities. The emphasis is on improving the implementation of central government decisions. As such, there is not a substantial change in the hierarchical relationships within government.

Political decentralization, on the other hand, transfers powers from a central government to a specialized territorial or functional unit. Political decentralization delegates substantial decisionmaking and discretionary powers. Examples would be the variety of forms of neighborhood government.

The following section covers a variety of issues related to administrative decentralization.

B. Administrative Decentralization: Neighborhood Facilities

1. Overview of Mechanisms

Administrative decentralization refers to the physical dispersal of administrative operations or delivery systems to subareas in a city and includes such things as branch service facilities, multi-service centers, and mini-city halls.

While all three mechanisms are structurally similar as neighborhood facilities, the major difference among them lies in the type of activities which are performed in the facility.

In some cases the names of these mechanisms carry several connotations because of the different operations which the mechanisms have had to perform in different cities. A structure called a "mini-city hall" in Columbus, Ohio may be very different from a "mini-city hall" in Boston, Massachusetts. Yet, if we can look beyond the labels which are used, we can discern a number of similarities in the types of facilities which do develop in different cities.

Branch service facilities generally provide regular city services such as building code enforcement and permit issuance, traffic engineering, streets maintenance, and some planning services. In addition, neighborhood fire, police, library, or health facilities are examples of branch service centers. The primary purposes of these are to ease the deployment of employees and equipment and to facilitate citizen access.

Multi-service centers are generally used to describe facilities that provide a variety of social services. Often, these centers are supported by non-city funds (e.g., Federal, state, or private). Many were funded by Community Action Program or Model Cities monies. The primary purposes of these centers are to improve citizen access to the services and to promote coordination in the delivery of social services.

Mini-city halls can generally be defined as a "neighborhood office or facility that serves primarily as a branch office for the city or county chief executive, and that provides services similar to those available at the main city hall."[3] Generally, the facility is run by city government, influenced by the chief executive, and funded primarily by the city. Generally, mini-city halls have provided some regular city services, assisted in complaint resolution, and promoted two-way communication.

On the general level, all these mechanisms differ from a completely centralized system in that:

- they are physically dispersed throughout the city; and
- personnel have limited discretion in making service delivery decisions for their area of town, although they are still responsible to a centralized government.

With these two major design considerations, neighborhood facilities could be used to achieve a number of the functions of citizen participation.

2. *Functions*

This section discusses the functions of neighborhood facilities. What each type of neighborhood facility--branch service facilities, multi-service centers, and mini-city halls--could accomplish depends to a large degree *on the types of services offered and the activities performed, and on the amount of effort devoted to and support provided for the implementation*. As in any of the citizen participation mechanisms that have been discussed in this module, implementation is very important. One has to plan and take advantage of the opportunities provided by neighborhood facilities. Unless a conscious effort is made, little will be accomplished. With these considerations in mind, the following outlines how successfully neighborhood facilities fulfill the four broad functions of citizen participation; that is, *accessibility*, *information*, *involvement*, and *accountability* functions.

Increased *accessibility* is the most obvious function served by neighborhood facilities. Citizens no longer have to travel to a downtown city hall to receive certain services. They can go to a neighborhood facility and receive help with such services as permit issuance or make complaints about garbage pick-up.

However, the extent to which *access* for citizens is increased by a neighborhood facility depends on the *number* of neighborhood facilities that are located in a city and on the *types of services* that are offered. Basically, these factors relate to the questions of *for whom* and *to what* do you want to provide access.

Sometimes a city will place a neighborhood facility in the low income section of town because low income groups have greater needs for better access. Transportation may be a problem which makes it difficult for these people to travel to a downtown facility. In addition, low income groups might find going to a downtown facility more intimidating than going to a facility located in their own neighborhood. However, if only one neighborhood facility is created, it increases access only for a limited number of people--although it may be an important target group.

In addition, the degree to which a neighborhood facility performs the accessibility function depends upon the types of services offered. A multi-service center that has counseling or training programs offers services for which access is relevant. However, a branch service facility that contains equipment for street cleaning or garbage pick-up does not provide services that citizens would receive by visiting a neighborhood facility. Thus, access is less of an issue for these types of services.

And finally, a neighborhood facility might not provide access to a wide number of key governmental officials or provide access to the decision-making process. The achieving of access to key governmental officials is dependent upon who is located in the neighborhood and the extent to which staff in the facility is willing to act as an advocate for area needs to others in the government. Providing access to the decisionmaking process is dependent upon the attitudes of local officials and their willingness to involve citizens.

The establishment of neighborhood facilities indirectly impacts upon the information function of citizen participation. The closer physical proximity provided by neighborhood facilities could promote better communication between government and citizens. Neighborhood facilities could be used not only to process citizen complaints and suggestions, but also to disseminate information.

However, while a neighborhood facility could increase the potential for better communication--including the collection and dissemination of information--a variety of communications activities or techniques need to be used in order to ensure that better communication will result. For example, if a stated goal of a neighborhood facility is to be sensitive to the needs of residents in the area and to find out how they feel about certain issues, the staff of the neighborhood facility could set up a citizens' advisory board comprised of residents of the area to examine relevant neighborhood issues as they arise. In addition, the staff could set up a complaint bureau to help residents deal with problems or complaints they might have with government. In addition, the facility might establish a newsletter that would be received by neighborhood residents and that would disseminate information concerning governmental actions or plans for the area and publicize city programs that are available for residents. These are just a few examples of the types of activities that might be employed within a neighborhood facility to promote better communication with citizens. Generally, communication activities have been more likely to occur in neighborhood facilities that are called mini-city halls rather than in multi-service centers or branch facilities.

A neighborhood facility would be particularly effective in performing the information function of citizen participation if employees of the facility have the power to act upon the information collected; that is, if they have the power to respond to the needs of area residents. If communication activities are used within the facility, employees could become more sensitive to needs of area residents that are not being met and recommend corrective action. In addition, closer physical proximity could promote an identification with and concern for a certain area of town on behalf of the city employees located in the neighborhood facilities. To the extent that employees have the power to act upon this increased sensitivity, service delivery could become more responsive, efficient, and effective.

Neighborhood facilities are not designed to involve citizens in governmental operations. The act of creating a neighborhood does not in and of itself promote involvement. However, if activities are undertaken within the facility to involve citizens--such as organizing an advisory group to the facility, organizing programs that involve citizens such as a Crime Alert Program, or holding public hearings within the facility--a neighborhood facility may reduce some of the barriers to involvement. Citizens might be more interested in participating in programs or activities that may have an impact on their own neighborhood. Citizens might feel more comfortable in attending activities held at a facility within their own neighborhood rather than traveling downtown to a central location. However, while involvement may be achieved through a neighborhood facility, this involvement is a consequence of activities performed within the overall structure rather than through the act of establishing a neighborhood facility.

And finally, accountability is promoted only indirectly through neighborhood facilities. Once again, this factor is not promoted simply by establishing a neighborhood facility. However, if the central government makes the employees of the facility responsible for the quality of service delivery within a neighborhood facility and if the central government has some way to monitor this quality, employees may feel more accountable for their actions.

In summary, a neighborhood facility has the potential for impacting upon a number of the functions of citizen participation. A neighborhood facility can be an important symbol of governmental concern for a certain area of town. By being located in a particular area, it facilitates access for residents of that area to government officials in the facility. By using a variety of communication techniques or other citizen participation mechanisms--such as newsletters, convenings, neighborhood councils, or complaint bureaus--a neighborhood facility could facilitate the collection and dissemination of information. In addition, the use of these communication techniques could also promote the involvement of citizens in governmental operations. And finally, a neighborhood facility could promote accountability if employees are held responsible for the quality of service delivery within a particular neighborhood.

As a means to promote citizen participation, a neighborhood facility has several potential disadvantages. First, its potential to promote citizen participation rests heavily on the ability of the staff to initiate activities that will involve citizens in its operations.

Second, while neighborhood facilities can increase the potential for better communication between citizens and local officials, it may also increase communication problems between officials located in neighborhood facilities and central administrative personnel. Thus, a good deal of time and attention needs to be devoted to monitoring the activities of neighborhood facilities and coordinating these activities with those of the central administration.

Third, the mechanisms are particularly subject to political attacks. Neighborhood facilities can be very expensive compared to other types of citizen participation mechanisms. Adequate resources have to be devoted in order to make these facilities effective. This may involve the hiring of more staff, the acquiring of more property or buildings, and the increasing of maintenance costs.

Fourth, because these types of operations are expensive, it raises the level of expectations concerning what they should be able to accomplish. However, some of the benefits of neighborhood facilities may take a while to realize. If a neighborhood facility is to be an effective outreach mechanism, the staff needs to achieve credibility and trust with the area residents. In addition, because a new organization or facility is being created, it may take time to develop an efficient organization characterized by effective working relationships.

The next few sections examine in detail the implementation of a neighborhood facility and offer suggestions concerning how some of the major design issues might be handled.

3. Implementation and Major Design Issues

a. Introduction

So far, this module has discussed three types of administrative decentralization or neighborhood facilities: branch service facilities, multi-service centers, and mini-city halls. While these mechanisms differ in purpose and activities, they are similar in that each involves physical dispersion (i.e., neighborhood facilities) and some decisionmaking discretion in the delivery of services.

Implementation is critical in determining the success of these mechanisms as a form of citizen participation. Implementing any of these mechanisms results in a major change in working relationships and routines, thus presenting a multitude of problems. The more change that occurs, the more difficult are the problems of implementation.

While a number of factors affect the success of a neighborhood facility, major considerations are:

- the clarity of purpose;
- the quality of staff;
- the level of expectations; and
- the strategy for development.

The activities that are initiated by a neighborhood facility will vary depending upon the reasons why a government is decentralizing. Thus, it is very important that purposes are explicitly outlined before the mechanism is implemented. If this is done, the facility can initiate the appropriate activities to meet these purposes.

As is true of many of the mechanisms discussed in this module, the quality of staff has a major effect on the success of the effort. They should be able to tolerate the ambiguity that often surrounds the beginning of a new program, to listen and communicate effectively and to lead but not manipulate.

The level of expectations of the variety of people associated with the establishment of a neighborhood facility will also affect success. These mechanisms take time to develop and unrealistic expectations could cause premature negative judgments.

Many of the effective examples of neighborhood facilities around the country have developed over time. Because of the amount of change that might be caused by the establishment of a neighborhood facility, it is often wise to phase in different aspects and activities over a period of time.

The next few sections discuss in detail each of these major factors affecting the success of a neighborhood facility.

b. Clarity of Purpose

In a previous section a variety of potential functions of neighborhood facilities were outlined. It was mentioned that these functions are not reached simply because a neighborhood facility is created and a certain amount of discretionary decisionmaking power is transferred. Whether these functions are achieved depends in large part upon the types of activities that are pursued through the neighborhood facility. Thus, it is very important that purposes and objectives are explicitly outlined and a strategy to achieve these objectives is developed before the mechanism is implemented. A problem often occurring in administrative decentralization is that goals and objectives are vague and poorly developed. What usually occurs in such a situation is that different people do not agree on what the mechanism is suppose to accomplish. The possibility then arises that the appropriate activities will not be undertaken to accomplish a certain goal and that people involved will be working towards different ends. Thus, the effort will be characterized by drift and confusion.

For example, a certain city contains a neighborhood that is predominately black and that has a history of great hostility and mistrust towards the local government. Neighborhood leaders complain that city government is too distant from the people and is unconcerned about their needs. The city decides to establish a neighborhood facility--such as a mini-city hall--in order to reduce tension and alienation. The government wants to improve communication with neighborhood residents and to achieve a better understanding of the needs and frustrations of area residents. In order to improve communication and achieve a better understanding of neighborhood needs, city officials decide that the following activities will be initiated:

- A neighborhood ombudsman will be set up to help area citizens deal with specific complaints or grievances they might have with local government.
- A citizens' advisory committee will be created to examine and discuss improvements that need to be made in the neighborhood with which the city might assist.

- A survey will be conducted of area residents to achieve a representative view of citizen attitudes toward local government operations and of citizen needs for services.

- A series of public meetings attended by key decisionmakers will be held at the neighborhood facilities in order to discuss programs that are presently in operation which might impact on the neighborhood.

This brief example illustrates the initial planning components or steps involved in clarifying the purposes of a neighborhood facility and developing a strategy to achieve those purposes. It contains a simplified statement of the problem; that is, there is great hostility and mistrust towards government. It provides an overall statement of the proposed solution to this problem; that is, to create a neighborhood facility that would improve communication and increase governmental understanding of citizen needs. And, this example contains a statement of the strategy that might be developed to implement that solution; that is, to set up an ombudsman, to create a citizens' advisory committee, to conduct a survey, and to hold a series of public meetings. This example is an oversimplication of a potential real life situation and is not meant to imply that these are the only--or even the best--steps that could be taken to address the problem. However, it does illustrate some of the major planning steps involved in clarifying the purpose of a neighborhood facility and in developing a strategy to achieve those purposes.

c. Quality of Staff

Another key to the successful implementation of a neighborhood facility is providing qualified, competent staff with adequate resources to accomplish the overall purposes or functions of the neighborhood facility. Personnel decisions are not always made solely on the basis of ability. Sometimes people who are having problems in a certain section of city government are transferred to a neighborhood facility. While this change might diffuse personnel problems in one section, it will threaten the overall success of this type of citizen participation mechanism. The success of neighborhood facilities is largely dependent upon quality staff who have the ability to listen and communicate effectively, and who lead but do not manipulate.

Staff may find themselves in an awkward position between the residents in a neighborhood and officials located at city hall. There may be a tendency for residents to view them as adversaries who are puppets of the local government and who are not really concerned about the problems and needs of the neighborhood. In addition, if staff try to act as advocate of the needs of the neighborhood, centralized city officials may feel the staff of the facility has "gone native" and is no longer a part of the city team.

Thus, there is a need for the staff to build credibility and trust with area residents. This can be done in a variety of ways--some of which were discussed in the Communications Module. Of major importance is the need for staff to interact with area residents so that residents can see that the staff is concerned and begin to view them as people rather than roles. In addition, staff could take steps to involve residents in the development of the neighborhood facility so that they begin to identify with it and help to make its activities more relevant.

In addition, the staff needs to sensitize central officials to the difficult role they are playing. Central officials need to be aware that staff does need a certain amount of independence if they are to perform their functions effectively.

In addition, depending upon the scope of the effort, adequate resources in terms of staff and money for activities need to be provided. Neighborhood facilities are relatively expensive. However, many programs fail because adequate resources are not provided. What is considered "adequate" depends upon what is to be accomplished. However, city government needs to be willing to devote the necessary resources so that staff is not overburdened by a multitude of tasks.

d. Expectations

It has been mentioned before that people tend to evaluate the success of an effort by comparing what happened during a certain time period with what they expected to happen. When a neighborhood facility is established, there are a variety of people who are interested in its results including city council members, administration officials, neighborhood facility staff, and neighborhood residents. Each of these major types of people may have different and unrealistic expectations of what the neighborhood facility will accomplish in a certain time period. City council members might expect that most of the promised benefits of a neighborhood facility will be realized in one year. Administration officials might expect the major benefits to be achieved in two years. Neighborhood facility staff think it will take three years to develop a viable program, and neighborhood residents think it will take six months.

Thus, it is important to create realistic judgments of what can be expected to occur by establishing a neighborhood facility. Sometimes this is difficult to achieve. Because these types of mechanisms are expensive, there is a tendency to oversell; that is, to promise that they will accomplish a number of wonderful things in order to build support for the mechanism. This tendency to oversell must be balanced by the realization that in doing so, one may jeopardize the continuation of the mechanism once it has been implemented. These mechanisms take time to develop and unrealistic expectations could cause premature negative judgments.

e. Strategy for Development

The establishment of a neighborhood organization may be a major change for staff, administrative officials, and neighborhood residents. Depending upon the number of services represented in the neighborhood facilities, there may be a tremendous amount of coordination needed among facility staff, and between staff and officials located in a downtown city hall. Thus, a variety of routines and procedures need to be developed to facilitate this coordination. At the same time, officials in the facility need to establish relationships and credibility with the residents of a neighborhood.

Because of the amount of change that might be induced by the establishment of a neighborhood facility, it may be wise to develop the mechanism in phases. For example, it may be wise to limit the amount of activities in the first year in order to concentrate on developing the organization and on establishing the credibility of the facility as an outreach mechanism. Then, as routines and relationships are developed, new activities can be initiated.

Because of the amount of change induced by the implementation, it may be wise to develop the mechanism in phases. This phasing helps reduce unrealistic expectations and eases somewhat the turmoil that might be introduced by instituting a number of major changes. It also allows staff to do a few things well rather than attempting too many activities and not being able to perform any of the activities successfully. The possibility of a phasing strategy, of course, depends upon the particular political situation in a locality and upon the goals of the neighborhood facility.

Thus, this section has discussed generally some of the major design considerations involved in implementing a neighborhood facility. The points that have been discussed have often caused problems with implementing neighborhood facilities.

4. Case Study

Boston's experience with mini-city halls illustrates common problems encountered in the implementation of a neighborhood facility. Boston[4] began instituting little city halls in July, 1968, in order to help reduce citizen alienation and resentment, which existed in all parts of the city, toward the central government. The major activities and functions of the little city halls were: 1) providing direct services to citizens; 2) answering complaints; 3) coordinating city services; 4) analyzing and evaluating city service delivery; 5) encouraging citizen participation; and 6) carrying out special projects with community groups.

There were 14 mini-city halls in 1971 with a combined budget of $800,000. It was attached to the Mayor's office in the Office of Public Service (OPS). This office had a 110-member staff with 80 staff members assigned to the 14 mini-city halls. OPS had a director with two deputy directors and two assistant directors who supervised sections with four to five staff members. The Services and Operations Section was responsible for analyzing and processing all complaints regarding city services. This section acted as a trouble shooter in identifying departmental bottlenecks and persuading departmental officials to tackle outstanding complaints. The Research and Planning Section was responsible for analyzing departmental operations with a view to recommending changes which would improve city services. They worked closely with upper level administrators and had some success in getting them to alter forms and procedures used by housing inspectors, modifying maintenance schedules in parks, and checking contracts for street repair work. The Communications and Policy Section was responsible for identifying needs for new city-wide and neighborhood policies or changes in policy. This section used information supplied by the neighborhood managers and from its own data gathering and analysis. In addition, this section worked closely with the Mayor's office in pressing for policy changes. And finally, the Internal Administration Section prepared the agency budget, supervised OPS central personnel, reviewed evaluation reports, channelled internal communications, and supervised the mini-city halls' sites and facilities.

The average constituency of a mini-city hall was about 50,000 to 60,000 people. Each mini-city hall was staffed by a manager, an assistant manager, two service coordinators, and a secretary-receptionist. Generally, managers resided in a community other than the one they work in to prevent the possibility of managers developing their own political turf, thereby becoming possible rivals to city councilmen or to state representatives. While the actual activities performed by a neighborhood manager depended upon their own personalities, their own assessments of the importance of various activities, and the community's characteristics, the managers generally performed the following tasks: 1) developed relationships with local staff and coordinated the delivery of some city services such as spring clean-up campaigns, certain inspectional services, and snow removal; 2) served as communications link between the neighborhood and OPS central; 3) acted as organizational catalysts in initiating, organizing, and coordinating community efforts, often linking them with public resources to meet a particular community problem; 4) organized local advisory councils; and 5) acted as an issue advocate.

Boston's mini-city halls encountered a good deal of criticism as not being worth the large expense of money. In his book Nordlinger provides an overall assessment of the effectiveness of the effort. He feels mini-city halls should receive a high rating in the provision of direct services because citizens are viewed as customers or clients and treated accordingly. In addition, citizen evaluations were markedly positive. Mini-city halls facilitated the complaint process and speeded up service delivery. However, many managers did not go beyond the complaint referral process, and there was little follow-up on complaints.

Neighborhood managers served as organizational catalysts. They helped the community to help themselves in such matters as drug programs, changes in public transportation routes, the establishment of drop-in centers for the elderly and teenagers, the distribution of surplus food, and the building of small parks.

However, mini-city halls had less of an impact on the improvement of city services. OPS Central accomplished little in its analysis of complaint data. And while some managers were successful in working with line personnel to improve services, particularly street cleaning, more than half the managers were not.

There is also a mixed record on issue advocacy. Where a manager devoted a good deal of time and energy to a certain matter, he gained some success. In addition, the managers were not successful in informing the Mayor's office about community needs and concerns.

Mini-city halls were not successful in facilitating community participation. Only five local advisory councils were set up, primarily because too little was done to create structures that would be significantly different from existing forms.

C. Political Decentralization

1. Overview

Political decentralization refers to the devolution of power by a centralized authority to governmental subunits. While the concept of decentralizing municipal governments has received much attention from academics and community action advocates, it has never been implemented to its fullest extent. Thus, there are no case studies to examine how well decentralization would work; however, some large metropolitan areas have adopted forms of decentralization where decisionmaking authority has been transferred to a governmental subunit. This has occurred particularly in school systems (New York and Detroit) and has had limited success. The purpose of this discussion is to present arguments that have been presented for and against political decentralization in order to provide an overview of potential benefits and costs.

2. Pro-Decentralization Arguments

Serious attention was given to decentralization as an outgrowth of the racial conflicts of the 1960's. Centralized municipal governments were viewed as causing a set of interrelated problems--most notably remoteness, lack of accountability, insensitivity, and citizen apathy. Policies set by a centralized authority and serving a wide area cannot adapt to the specific needs of a certain clientele. The major institutions have failed because control is not in the hands of people who live in them. In addition, certain ethnic and racial groups are excluded from the existing power structure, and consequently, their interests are frequently not taken into consideration. This results in an inequitable distribution of services.

Proponents feel that political decentralization could solve what they feel are problems with a centralized administration. They feel that decentralization could improve the delivery of social services. While it may not be possible to reduce cost, the quality of the services would be improved because they could be tailored to the needs of a specific area. Greater rapport would be created between the providers and users of social services which would make the bureaucrats more sensitive to the needs of their clients. In addition, such a system would result in a more equitable distribution of services.

Proponents of decentralization also argue that it would enlarge the scope and magnitude of citizen participation. They feel that large governmental entities increase the scope and complexity of issues, thus making it more difficult for the citizen to gain the knowledge needed for effective participation. This makes accountability more difficult and restricts the opportunities for communication between bureaucrats and citizens. Political decentralization, on the other hand, reduces the scope of government, making it easier for the citizen to participate, and facilitates the process of encouraging the citizen to offer his opinions.

And finally, proponents view decentralization as a means for creating territorial basis for the powerless to challenge the elites that run the society. By making government more responsive and accountable to all people, decentralization reduces friction between the powerless and the powerful.

3. Con-Decentralization Arguments

Opponents challenge some of the basic assumptions of decentralization and charge that in many cases it cannot achieve the potential offered by proponents. They deny that centralization necessarily is the cause of the problems identified by proponents. Opponents suggest that such problems as insensitivity, remoteness, and lack of accountability are tendencies for any organization and should not be blamed on centralization per se. They are components of a bureaucratic style that can be handled more easily by approaches other than decentralizing government.

In addition, opponents argue that a centralized government is more likely to adopt policies that are sensitive to the needs of the minority than is a decentralized government. They argue that in places where decentralized government has occurred, the ruling structure tends to be much more conservative and insensitive to minority needs than are centralized governments. Thus, empirically there is little reason to believe that decentralization would result in a more equitable distribution of social services. A centralized bureaucracy is concerned with developing coherent and consistent policies that can be provided with equity, if not uniformity, throughout the citizenry.

In addition, a decentralized government would be much more expensive to operate. Thus, given the financial problems experienced by local government, this could conceivably result in fewer services rather than better services.

And finally, it may not necessarily be true that a decentralization of government would make it easier for citizens to participate. Complexity arises because so many of the problems of an urban government interact. These problems will still exist even if the geographic scale is reduced. In fact, it may be much more difficult to marshall resources to attack these problems.

D. Summary

The overall goal of this submodule is to familiarize the reader with the use of decentralization as a form of citizen participation. After completing this submodule, the reader should be aware of and be able to specify:

- different types of neighborhood facilities;
- different functions of neighborhood facilities;
- major design issues involved in implementing a neighborhood facility; and
- arguments for and against political decentralization.

A distinction has been made between administrative decentralization and political decentralization. Administrative decentralization refers to the delegation of responsibility for the delivery of services from a central governmental facility to a neighborhood facility in order to increase access and to improve communication. Political decentralization, on the other hand, transfers powers from a central government to a specialized territorial or functional unit.

With regard to administrative decentralization, different types of neighborhood facilities are branch service facilities, multi-service centers, and mini-city halls. The major difference among these mechanisms is the type of activities performed and services offered. Branch service facilities are generally designed to ease the deployment of employees and equipment and to facilitate citizen access. Branch service facilities have generally not been used to stimulate citizen participation--although they could be if the proper activities were initiated. Multi-service centers usually provide a variety of social services and are designed to improve citizen access to services and to promote the coordination among social services. Mini-city halls serve primarily as branch offices for the city or county chief executive and provide services similar to those available at the main city hall. Generally mini-city halls have provided some regular city services, assisted in complaint resolution, and promoted two-way communication.

Neighborhood facilities could potentially impact on the four functions of citizen participation. What each type of facility could accomplish depends to a large degree on the types of services offered and the activities performed, and on the amount of effort devoted to and support provided for implementation. The following summarizes how neighborhood facilities relate to the four functions of citizen participation:

- Accessibility--By being located in a particular area, a neighborhood facility makes it easier for residents of that area to gain access to governmental officials and services in the facility. The extent to which access is facilitated depends upon the number of neighborhood facilities that are located in a city, upon the types of officials located in the facility, and their willingness to act as advocates.

- Information--By using a variety of communication techniques or other citizen participation mechanisms--such as newsletters, convenings, neighborhood councils or complaint bureaus--a neighborhood facility could facilitate the collection and dissemination of information.

- Involvement--A neighborhood facility may reduce some of the barriers to citizen involvement by initiating activities designed to involve citizens--such as a Crime Alert Program or Citizens' Advisory Council. Citizens might be more interested and feel more comfortable in participating in programs and activities that have an impact on their own neighborhood.

- Accountability--A neighborhood facility might increase accountability if employees are held responsible for the quality of services offered in a particular neighborhood.

Implementation is critical to the success of a neighborhood facility. Important design issues are:

- Clarity of Purpose--It is very important that purposes and objectives are explicitly outlined and a strategy to achieve these objectives is developed before the mechanism is implemented.

- Quality of Staff--The success of neighborhood facilities is largely dependent upon quality staff who have the ability to listen and communicate effectively, and who lead but do not manipulate.

- Level of Expectations--In order to prevent premature negative judgments, it is important to promote realistic expectations among the variety of people involved with the facility concerning what the facility could accomplish.

- Strategy for Development--Because of the amount of change that might be caused by the establishment of a neighborhood facility, it is often wise to phase in different aspects and activities of the facility over a period of time.

This discussion on political decentralization differs from previous submodules. While the concept has received a good deal of discussion in the literature on citizen participation, it has never been fully implemented and many issues remain to be resolved. Consequently, rather than concentrating on design issues, the discussion in the previous section covers the general arguments presented in support or opposition to political decentralization.

The following covers the critical issues contained in arguments supporting political decentralization:

- Centralized governments cause a set of interrelated problems--remoteness, lack of accountability, insensitivity, citizen apathy, and a lack of an ability to adapt to the needs of a certain area.
- An inequitable distribution of services exists because certain groups are excluded from power and their interests ignored.
- Political decentralization would improve the quality of services by tailoring those services to the needs of a specific area.
- Bureaucrats would become more sensitive to the needs of their clients.
- A more equitable distribution of services would result.
- By reducing the scope of government, political decentralization makes it easier for citizens to participate.
- Political decentralization provides a territorial base for the powerless to challenge the elites of society.

Critical issues contained in the arguments of those opposing political decentralization are:

- Centralization is not necessarily the cause of the problems cited by proponents--insensitivity, remoteness, and lack of accountability are components of a bureaucratic style that can be handled more easily by approaches other than decentralization.
- A centralized government is more likely to adopt policies that are sensitive to the needs of a minority than is a decentralized government.
- Decentralization would be much more expensive resulting in fewer services rather than better services.
- Decentralization reduces the geographic scale of government, but not the complexity--no reason exists why this should make government more understandable, thus resulting in increased citizen participation.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION MECHANISMS:
GRIEVANCE PROCESSING

The overall goal of this submodule is to familiarize the reader with the use of grievances processing mechanisms as a form of citizen participation. After completing this submodule, the reader should be aware of and able to specify:

- different types of grievance processing mechanisms;
- different citizen participation functions served by grievance processing mechanisms; and
- major design issues involved in implementing grievance processing mechanisms.

GRIEVANCE PROCESSING

A. Introduction

This sub-module covers a class of citizen participation mechanisms that involves assisting citizens in dealing with government bureaucracies and in resolving grievances they have with government. In recent decades there has been a continual expansion both in the functions performed by government, and in the size of the bureaucracy required to perform those functions. Local and state governments now perform a wide array of regulatory, service, and fiscal functions that impact on every citizen.

The consequences of this growth have not all been good. Most legislative bodies are now ill-equipped to monitor and oversee administrative agencies. Traditional mechanisms to ensure governmental accountability, responsiveness, and accessibility have become increasingly inadequate, and the citizen finds it increasingly difficult even to remain informed about government. In short, the growth and corresponding bureaucratization of government has not been without its disadvantages and critics.

The problems associated with big government are also exacerbated by (some would argue that they cause) other conditions which are prevalent in some communities: 1) alienation of citizens from government; 2) public distrust of public officials; and 3) low levels of personal and political efficacy. In addition, these problems are also compounded by instances--however rare--of neglect, incompetence, corruption, and prejudice on the part of public officials.

It is not at all surprising in this era of big government that citizens have complaints and grievances about how government regulates their behavior, provides services to them, or manages the public purse. Grievance processing has thus become an important function that governments of all sizes perform, and a number of distinct mechanisms have evolved to facilitate the processing of grievances. Some of these mechanisms recognize implicitly a need for a diverse set of checks and balances even in the best of governmental systems.

In this sub-module, mechanisms and procedures for grievance processing are discussed. Particular attention is devoted to two of the most common and best developed forms of grievance processing: the ombudsman and the complaint bureau. The ombudsman is an independent third party who investigates citizen complaints or grievances against the government. Complaint bureaus are administrative units within government designed to collect and resolve citizen grievances or complaints.

The ombudsman and complaint bureau mechanisms are quite similar in nature. Both are designed to receive and respond to citizen complaints and grievances. They differ most with respect to their scope and source of authority. The ombudsman mechanism typically is characterized by greater independence and autonomy than the complaint bureau mechanism. In addition, ombudsmen may enjoy a larger measure of public trust, support, and awareness than do complaint bureaus.

Because these two mechanisms are so central to a discussion of grievance processing, a general description is provided of each.

1. Ombudsman

The International Bar Association has defined the ombudsman as:

> An office provided for by the constitution or by action of the legislature or parliament and headed by an independent, high-level public official who is responsible to the legislature or parliament, who receives complaints from aggrieved persons against government agencies, officials, and employees or who acts on his own motion, and who has the power to investigate, recommend corrective action, and issue reports.[5]

The idea of an ombudsman originated in Sweden in the early nineteenth century, but did not receive widespread attention until after the establishment of Denmark's first Ombudsman in 1955. Since that time, the office has appeared in an ever-increasing number of places and forms. In fact, the very popularity of the ombudsman concept has threatened the idea. Because the term "ombudsman" often has been used loosely to describe all sorts of complaint processing mechanisms--including those that fail to meet the criteria that originally distinguished the ombudsman from other complaint processing mechanisms--the meaning of the word and consequently, of the idea it represents, have been diluted considerably.

According to the original conception:

1. The ombudsman is an independent and nonpartisan officer of the legislature, usually provided for in the constitution, who supervises the administration.

2. The ombudsman deals with specific complaints from the public against administrative injustice and maladministration.

3. He has the power to investigate, criticize and publicize, but not to reverse, administrative action.[6]

In many of the variants of the traditional ombudsman system, these requirements are relaxed considerably. For example, in the United States it has been more the exception than the rule that the ombudsman is a creation of, and responsible to, the executive branch of government, as opposed to the traditional legislative ombudsman system in which the ombudsman is a creation of, but frequently independent from, the legislative branch of government. These variations notwithstanding, some degree of genuine independence appears to be essential to the ombudsman concept. The ombudsman is not merely a complaint processor. He or the office possesses a reputation for being beyond reproach and possessing unimpeachable integrity. He or the office is impartial and nonpartisan. To achieve and maintain this image, the ombudsman requires independence.

2. Complaint Bureaus

Complaint bureaus perform many of the functions performed by ombudsmen. The complaint bureau is distinguished by the fact that it is an administrative unit of government--operated by and accountable to the administration. Complaint bureaus can be organized as either a centralized or decentralized complaint processor. A centralized complaint bureau typically would operate out of the Office of the Mayor or City Manager and receive and process complaints related to all local government agencies, programs, and personnel. Some complaint bureaus are set up on a decentralized basis with individual departments having their own complaint bureaus designed and empowered to deal only with those complaints that fall within a narrowly defined jurisdiction or service area.

The next section discusses the functions that complaint processing mechanisms can perform that relate to various aspects of citizen participation.

B. Functions

This section discusses the citizen participation related functions of grievance processing mechanisms. What each type of grievance processing mechanism could accomplish depends on a number of factors such as public awareness and trust of the mechanism, governmental support, and the quality and commitment of the staff. With these considerations in mind, this section discusses how successfully grievance processing mechanisms such as ombudsmen and complaint bureaus perform the four broad functions of citizen participation; that is, information, accessibility, involvement and accountability. Then a discussion of more specific functions served by these mechanisms is provided.

In assessing the information collection function of grievance processing mechanisms, several points should be kept in mind. The first is that grievance processing mechanisms are somewhat limited in scope. They are generally created to receive complaints or requests for assistance or information from citizens. Given this objective, however, they have some definite advantages. Citizens who otherwise might not contact a government official or agency at all are generally more likely to contact an ombudsman or complaint bureau. This is especially true when citizens are aware of the mechanism, regard it with trust, and feel that their contact is going to be productive because the ombudsman or complaint bureau is responsive, impartial and effective. So the existence of these mechanisms tends to increase the amount of information government receives from citizens.

In addition to helping a citizen resolve [illegible] particular problem, some complaint bureaus and ombudsman systematically keep records of the complaints that are made and use this information to identify problems that might exist in a governmental department or division. For example, if one person complains that the garbage collectors left a trail of refuse behind them when they picked up the complaintant's garbage last week, this may be a random occurence and not indicate that garbage collectors are always careless. However, if a number of complaints are received, this indicates a major problem which the Division of Sanitary Disposal needs to correct.

Grievance processing mechanisms can also be used to disseminate information. Much of the work done by ombudsmen and especially by complaint bureaus involves referral or information dissemination; that is, the giving of information to citizens. Complaint bureaus or ombudsmen are visible to the public, so many people call them if they have a question about government such as where might they get emergency housing or food. Generally, this type of information dissemination is limited to those citizens who complain or request information and to the subject or issue area that caused the complaint or request.

In addition, some complaint bureaus or ombudsmen regularly conduct an information campaign to publicize their activities. Thus, through the use of such devices as newspaper columns, the release of special reports, talk shows on the electronic media, and brochures, a complaint bureau or an ombudsman can publicize their existence and talk about their activities. For example, one ombudsman has a regular weekly column in the newspaper. This column is used to talk about one case (or a set of cases) which the office resolved. The purpose of these activities is not necessarily to present an expose concerning how government is causing problems for citizens, but rather to show that government is trying to be responsive to citizen needs. In addition, by following the activities of an ombudsman, a citizen can learn more about governmental operations. Thus if certain communications activities are pursued, a complaint bureau or ombudsman can help disseminate information.

Complaint bureaus or ombudsmen can also increase the accessibility of governmental officials to citizens. This can be done in two ways. First, the grievance processor can act as advocate for the person making the complaint. If a citizen has a complaint against a police officer, the grievance processor can contact the appropriate person within the police department to handle this problem. Thus, the citizen achieves access through the ombudsman or complaint bureau to the appropriate official in the police department. Second, if the citizen wants to make the contact himself, the complaint bureau or ombudsman can help them find out whom to contact about a particular problem or need. Increased accessibility of citizens to government is also accomplished through these mechanisms. Though it is true that these mechanisms could act as just another layer of bureaucracy making it difficult for citizens to contact or interact with government officials or agencies--especially if they are poorly implemented--this is generally not the case. Rather, complaint bureaus and ombudsmen tend to increase citizen access to government. When citizens do not know exactly whom to contact, these mechanisms can be used to help them find out whom to contact about a particular problem or need. From the perspective of the government official or agency, these mechanisms can be quite useful because they facilitate grievance processing and ensure that citizens are directed to the appropriate place. Though grievance processing mechanisms can be powerful tools for helping citizens to get access to government, it should be recognized that the role often played by these mechanisms is that of a linker or mediator. In other words, access for the citizen is often indirect or mediated through these mechanisms.

Grievance processing mechanisms only indirectly promote citizen involvement. When citizens contact a complaint bureau or an ombudsman, the reason for the contact generally is quite specific. If the contact generates a response that is immediate and directly related to the reason for the contact, then the citizen is likely to feel as though he has the ability to interact successfully with government; that is, to get a response from government as the result of an initiative he has taken. In this way, grievance processing mechanisms can help to increase citizen involvement. Grievance processing mechanisms are designed to help the citizen deal with and get action from the governmental bureaucracy. When they operate well, they tend to increase a citizen's sense of efficacy. This in turn provides a citizen with an increased feeling of involvement in government. Government ceases to be the large, unresponsive, inefficient, and bureaucratic entity that some citizens perceive it to be. However, the type of involvement promoted by these mechanisms is very limited and indirect.

Grievance processing mechanisms are particularly effective in promoting accountability. The grievance processing mechanisms discussed in this sub-module are specifically designed to make government officials answerable for their actions. Ombudsmen are particularly well suited to increase accountability because of the independence they have. And if complaint bureaus enjoy the support of the highest ranking administrative officials, then they too are powerful instruments for promoting accountability.

In some communities, the information collected from the ombudsmen or complaint bureau is used for management purposes. That is, administrative officials can monitor and evaluate the performance of government agencies, programs, and personnel on the basis of the type and pattern of complaints that emerge. The important point to make, however, is that these mechanisms can only promote accountability if they are linked to a response system. For example, it does little good in terms of accountability for a complaint bureau to discover that the residents of a particular area are consistently being denied certain services to which they are entitled unless something is done to alter that situation.

In summary, complaint processing mechanisms can be used in a variety of ways. They can be used to help resolve grievances that individual citizens or groups of citizens have against government and which result from perceptions of government inefficiency, corruption, or discrimination. Depending on the nature of the request or complaint, the complaint bureau may either attempt to respond to the citizen's contact directly, refer it to another unit of government, or act as the citizen's advocate in processing the request or complaint through government until it is resolved.

These mechanisms are valuable sources of information. If the citizen contacts with grievance processing institutions are carefully collected, analyzed, and reported, or if an effort is made to have these mechanisms initiate the systematic collection of information from citizens concerning what they perceive their needs to be and how they evaluate government programs, agencies, personnel and policies, then they can be used to improve government planning, policy making and operations. For example, a sharp increase in complaints directed at a particular government agency may draw attention to areas requiring some sort of remedial action. Likewise, grievance processing records can be used to predict problems. A city manager, mayor, or department head can use these records to gain great insight into the performance of governmental units and into the needs and priorities of citizens.

Finally, grievance processing mechanisms can be used to improve government's image and the citizens' trust in and understanding of government. Some grievance processing mechanisms serve both a grievance processing and information dissemination function. Citizens turn to these institutions not only to seek a governmental response to some complaint, but also to get information. From a functional point of view, these institutions can help inform citizens about government. From a public relations point of view, a grievance processing mechanism that responds to citizen questions and complaints is likely to be viewed by citizens as evidence of a government's desire to make government more responsive to citizens.

How successful a grievance processing mechanism is in accomplishing any of these functions is largely dependent upon how the mechanism is designed and implemented. The following section examines those design and implementation issues that are most likely to influence the success or failure of these mechanisms.

C. Implementation and Major Design Issues

1. Independence/Autonomy

One of the most important issues that needs to be considered in the design of any grievance processing mechanism is the amount of independence they possess. The traditional ombudsman enjoys a great deal of independence. The office is created by an act of the legislature. The incumbent enjoys broad powers to investigate government actions and protection from capricious dismissal. In fact, this independence distinguishes the traditional ombudsman from other grievance processing mechanisms.

Complaint bureaus and executive or quasi-ombudsmen have far less autonomy and independence since they are generally appointed to office and serve at the pleasure of a community's chief executive officer. It is possible for a complaint bureau or an executive ombudsman to have autonomy, but this usually results either from the willingness of the chief administrative officer to grant this autonomy (which may just as easily be taken away) or from the ability of those who operate this type of grievance processing mechanism to win independence. This usually requires considerable political skill and takes a long time.

Public trust in government may affect how much independence is required. If there is a great deal of distrust in government or if government has a bad public image owing to scandals, then an independent grievance processor may be necessary to overcome public distrust or the reluctance of citizens to go to government with their problems. In short, image cannot be separated from the independence issue. In some communities, the only way to win public trust and to assure part or all of the community that the effort to process grievances is impartial and genuine is to accord the grievance processor considerable independence.

There are some advantages and disadvantages to granting independence to the grievance processor. The major advantage is that independent grievance processors such as ombudsmen may have the freedom to take initiatives and make suggestions that less independent grievance processors do not have. The disadvantage is that it may be more difficult to effect good working relationships between an ombudsman and agencies or personnel of local government than it is between one unit of local government and the other. In other words, the special condition of independence may be a barrier that hinders certain types of grievance processing requiring close working relationships between the grievance processing agency and other agencies of government.

2. Degree of Centralization

Another important issue is how centralized to make the grievance processing system. Most ombudsmen systems tend to be quite centralized. One office at one location receives all citizen contacts, and this one office has jurisdiction over all the matters that come before it. Complaint bureaus and executive ombudsmen can operate within a centralized or decentralized structure. Centralized systems typically are attached directly to the office of the chief executive officer of local government. In decentralized systems, each major department may have its own complaint processing office.

The major advantages of a centralized system is that it is far easier to coordinate the activities of the office. Instead of a number of separate complaint processors operating independently of one another--thereby increasing the possibility of instituting different procedures and policies--a centralized complaint processing system falls under the direct supervision of one government office. The major disadvantage is that a centralized system may not be sufficiently flexible to accomodate the different functions and organizational set ups of different department or governmental units.

Another issue related to centralization is the ease of access for citizens. It can be argued that a centralized location promotes its use by citizens. Most citizens use a telephone to make a complaint. Thus, having problems traveling to a central location is usually not an issue. In addition, the ombudsman or complaint bureau can publicize one telephone number in advertising efforts to make citizens more aware of its existence and availability.

However, if a city has a decentralized service delivery system in operation--such as a mini-city hall or multi-service center--that has credibility within the community, it may be advantageous to establish an ombudsman or complaint bureau within that neighborhood facility. A decentralized complaint processing mechanism such as this might stimulate citizens to voice their feelings and complaints. The reason for this should be quite apparent. Those people who have some fear or distrust of government may be more likely to go to a government office to register a complaint if they can do it close to home in a familiar and non-threatening location. In one complaint processing system, citizens can go to fire houses located in their neighborhoods to call or contact government with their requests or complaints. The fire house has a non-threatening image and is familiar, close and easily accessible.

3. Jurisdiction/Scope of Authority

The jurisdiction or scope of authority of any complaint processing mechanism needs to be closely related to the purposes the mechanism is designed to serve.

For example, most ombudsman systems have as their primary function the mediation of citizen grievances against the government. In narrowly defined ombudsman systems, the ombudsman may restrict his activity to the pursuit of major cases in which he is a grievance processing mechanism of the last resort. In more broadly defined systems the ombudsman may handle a large volume of cases, many of which simply require information and referral activities, as opposed to major, concentrated investigative efforts.

Another issue that needs to be addressed is whether the office is going to act as a monitoring system for management purposes. Is the office to concern itself with helping to resolve an individual citizen's grievance or helping to institute systemic or process changes in government--or both? Also, an important issue to consider is whether or not the ombudsman office is going to perform a general government monitoring function that includes the issuance of reports to the community at large and to the government.

The range of powers which ombudsmen possess also varies widely. Some have only the power to provide information and referral services to citizens. Others have the power to conduct investigations and follow up on complaints; some even have the power to investigate records and review rules and regulations on their own initiative. In some systems the ombudsman has the power to make recommendations and to issue reports. These powers coupled with the authority to publicize his activities and findings, often give the ombudsman the power to persuade.

Ultimately most of the power the ombudsman possesses rests on the ability to persuade. This ability in turn is largely dependent on the ability of the ombudsman to publicize his findings, opinions, or recommendations through the media, thereby focusing or influencing public opinion; and on the ability of the ombudsman to be perceived as a fair and impartial public servant possessing great integrity, a perception that is much easier to establish if the ombudsman enjoys some degree of genuine independence.

The mandated functions of complaint bureaus typically include the receiving and processing of citizen complaints. The processing of complaints might involve acting directly on those complaints--that is, the person who receives the complaint actually resolves it--or referring the complaint to someone else to resolve. Complaint bureaus may also be directed to compile and analyze the log of complaints and make periodic reports to government officials (such as city managers, mayors, council members, or city or county commissioners) and/or to the public. Finally, some complaint bureaus are directed to provide information to the public and to take a strong initiative in disseminating information concerning government to citizens.

The powers extended to complaint bureaus are generally far more limited than the powers extended to an ombudsman. Whereas an ombudsman can do many things on his own initiative, complaint bureaus are arms of the government and operate under the direction and according to rules and regulations of some supervisory government official such as a department head or city manager. Frequently, complaint bureaus only have the power to refer complaints and then to follow up on the action that was taken in response to a complaint. The power of a complaint bureau is thus dependent upon the importance attached to it by upper level administrative officials. The more seriously the function of the complaint bureau is regarded by upper level administrative officials, the more power the complaint bureau will have to influence the behavior of government service units.

In general then, complaint bureaus serve information and referral functions. They act on specific complaints related to service delivery and program management issues. Complaint bureaus are processors--they process and help resolve complaints. They generally get involved in formulating or making recommendations about policies less frequently than ombudsmen--though this will depend on how they are regarded by those who establish them.

If a complaint bureau is centralized and operates out of, and is identified with, a government's chief executive officer, that bureau's scope of authority will tend to be broad. If a decentralized complaint bureau system is established, with each major department having its own complaint bureau, the scope of authority will tend to be narrow and specific. The source of authority of a complaint bureau will rest with the chief of the administrative unit to which the complaint bureau is attached.

Complaint bureaus have almost always been operated and created by the administrative branch of government. Occasionally, however, complaint bureaus are established by the legislative arm of government in an effort to monitor the activities and performance of the administration and to formalize and systematize the mediation or "casework" function that elected legislators have traditionally performed for their constituents. In this latter instance, citizens turn to their elected representatives for assistance in resolving complaints they have with government. Most often these complaints are handled on an ad hoc basis, and a formalized system for responding to them is neither created nor publicized.

4. Staffing and Organization

The key to the successful operation of a grievance processing mechanism is organization. Any grievance processing mechanism must be able to respond to a vast number of citizen initiated complaints or queries. When complaints are complex or difficult to resolve, the complaint processing mechanism should track and follow up on whatever actions are taken in response to the complaint or query. In addition, if complaints are documented and used for policy, program, and resource management, a system must be devised to record, analyze, and report the data. All of these things require that an ombudsman's office or a complaint bureau be especially well managed and organized and capable of producing speedy responses to the complaints and questions of citizens.

The staff required to administer a complaint bureau or ombudsman's office will vary with the number and nature of the complaints that are received. The greater the number of citizen contacts, the more varied the nature of the contacts, and the less routine or predictable the contacts, the larger the staff that will be required.

The staff who have direct contact with citizens should have an easy and outgoing manner and a genuine desire to serve citizens. In addition they need a good understanding of the operation and organization of government. If the staff is comprised of people who are long time civil servants and who have broad experiences in government, they may have already acquired the knowledge of government that make them good candidates for positions in a complaint bureau. However, for other staff members, training may have to be designed to teach them about the organization and operation of government, and especially about which personnel and which government units are responsible or have authority for what things. Also, specially designed resource books can be prepared that provide: a) suggested responses to typical complaints or suggestions, and b) well-indexed directories of government agencies and personnel and of their responsibilities, jurisdictions, and the services they provide can also be helpful to complaint bureau staff. And finally, adequate training in the use of carefully designed systems for recording, following up, and reporting on citizen complaints is also invaluable to complaint bureau or ombudsman staffs.

In ombudsman offices, the choice of the ombudsman is very important. Not only must the person selected have the organizational skills required to operate the office efficiently, but also he must enjoy the confidence of the public and the respect of all major segments of the community. Consequently, the ombudsman and those that work in an ombudsman system have to be fair and impartial. If the ombudsman is to be viewed with trust and confidence by citizens, and if citizens are going to turn to the ombudsman for assistance, the ombudsman must be able to establish and maintain a reputation for being fair and impartial.

At the same time it is equally important that the ombudsman and his staff enjoy the confidence, trust, and respect of government officials. Most problems are going to be resolved informally. The better the working relationship between the ombudsman and the government bureaucracy, the greater the likelihood of finding fast and informal solutions to problems.

Consequently, a good knowledge of how the government bureaucracy functions is a most important quality for an ombudsman and his staff to have--it facilitates problem solving and the establishment of good working relationships with government personnel.

In the legislative or traditional ombudsman model, ombudsmen frequently are lawyers or have extensive legal training. Since in the traditional model the ombudsman is frequently making recommendations for legislation or examining behavior in terms of law, legislation, or administrative rules and regulations, such legal training would seem to be of great value. In other forms of the ombudsman, however, such training would not appear to be a prerequisite for the position.

5. Style of Operation

A number of other factors have an impact on how successful any grievance processing mechanism will be. These have been subsumed under the heading of "style of operation" and include such things as role perception, use of outreach programs, communication with the public, and accessibility to the public.

The staff who operate grievance processing mechanisms can perceive their role in different ways. For example, it is not uncommon to find ombudsmen who perceive themselves as impartial investigators of alleged government wrongdoing. Strictly followed, this role does not involve the ombudsman in helping to resolve a particular grievance, advocating some particular course of action, or acting as an arbitrator between government and the agrieved party. Rather, it involves investigating a complaint and reporting the results of the investigation either to the public, the government or both. It is left to someone else to apply the results of the investigation.

Other ombudsmen and grievance processors view the roles they perform much more broadly and actively engage in such activities as arbitration, direct negotiation, and advocacy. They adopt whatever style is effective in processing and resolving complaints.

What style or role is followed depends to a great extent on the purposes the mechanism is designed to service, how the mechanism is viewed by the public and government, and the capabilities of the staff to perform certain roles. Strictly defined roles such as that of an impartial investigator are better suited for certain ombudsmen who deal almost exclusively with major cases of government corruption, malfeasance, or inefficiency. Such a role is probably less well suited for resolving smaller, more typical complaints or requests that most citizens have. These do not require an impartial investigation. They often only require the interest of a knowledgeable, sympathetic facilitator who can deal with the government bureaucracy or understands government regulations.

Another aspect of style of operation has to do with the use of outreach programs. Some grievance processing mechanisms operate passively. Complaints and requests are responded to, but no effort is made to stimulate the use of the mechanisms by citizens. Other grievance processing mechanisms are much more aggressive. Through the use of outreach programs they publicize their existence widely and they attempt to discover problems and encourage citizens to voice problems.

Citizen awareness of a grievance processing mechanism can be promoted in a number of ways. The existence of complaint bureaus can be advertised in the media or communicated through public service announcements. Brochures can be distributed describing the services of the office and containing "peel off and press on" telephone numbers that easily can be attached on or near a person's phone. Public affairs programs can be used to communicate with the public, and regular reports can be issued that are reprinted in the newspapers or covered in the media. A regular newspaper column can be used that details the facts of particular cases that have been handled by the office. The column has many purposes including providing information about government and citizen rights and responsibilities to citizens, and maintaining a visible presence before the public. Mobile units, in which grievance processing staff go out and circulate through the community, can also be used to facilitate people's access to and familiarity with the mechanism.

There are several advantages to an outreach program. Many citizens who might be reluctant to try to resolve them may be motivated to voice their complaints when a convenient governmental mechanism such as a complaint bureau is available to them. Outreach programs help to reach and serve those most alienated from and those most in need of government services. In addition, outreach programs can help to identify problems before they become widespread and serious.

The major disadvantage of an outreach program is that it might produce expectations on the part of the citizenry that cannot be met or a volume of citizen contact that the mechanism cannot process. The possibility also exists to stimulate citizens to perceive problems where none exist. Since the success of a complaint processing mechanism depends almost entirely on its ability to process grievances and provide information to citizens, a balance must be reached between the mechanism's ability to respond to citizen contacts and its efforts to publicize its activities and functions or engage in outreach. If the mechanism is too small to deal effectively with the volume of citizen contacts that arise, the result may very well be counterproductive. Citizens may become extremely dissatisfied and the mechanism may develop the image of being ineffective--an image likely to undermine its ability to function successfully and properly.

The manner in which the complaint processing mechanism communicates with the public and those who contact it has an important impact on its image in the community and its success. If any complaint processing mechanism is going to be effective, citizens must be aware of its existence and trust that it will be worth their while to contact that mechanism.

In locations where there is a high degree of distrust of government, creating citizen confidence in any complaint processing mechanism--and especially one that is itself an administrative unit of government--may represent a formidable challenge. Citizen confidence, however, will be more directly related to performance than to any other factor. If an ombudsman or complaint bureau is conscientious in responding to citizen complaints and successful in quickly resolving those complaints, then it is likely to gain citizen confidence and win the trust and respect of citizens. By publicizing their activities and performance records, complaint bureaus and ombudsmen are more likely to be used by citizens than if there is no evidentiary basis upon which citizens can assess the utility of contacting the complaint bureau.

In addition, a governmental response to a complaint should be communicated to whoever initiated the complaint. Consequently, follow up procedures for feeding back to citizens the actions taken in response to their complaints are highly desirable and tend to improve the public image of the utility of the complaint processing mechanism.

D. Case Study

The city of Dayton, Ohio established an ombudsman system, called the Joint Office of Citizen Complaints (JOCC), in 1971 with support from an OEO innovative demonstration grant and a local foundation. Dayton's Ombudsman is now institutionalized in the community and the responsibility for its operation has been assumed by the city, the county, and the local school board. The budget for the JOCC is around $125,000 and comes from the three groups mentioned above along with some money from United Way. The JOCC thus has been institutionalized with broad community support. It has been chosen for discussion here primarily because an example of many of the points discussed in previous sections and embodies some innovative design features.

The JOCC is an incorporated entity governed by a board of trustees consisting of nine members--three each from the County, the City, and the School Board. The following five purposes guide the activities of the office:

- resolve reasonable grievances against local government by Dayton/Montgomery County citizens;
- provide information and referral services;
- acquaint Dayton/Montgomery County citizens with problems faced by local governments;
- assist citizens who have been unsuccessful at achieving aid; and
- coordinate emergency services.

In short, the Office seeks to assure that every citizen who has a complaint or problem is heard and that this complaint is satisfactorily and equitably solved. It is clear from the above statement of purpose that the Office is designed to engage in a broad set of activities.

Since its inception, there have been two Ombudsmen--the first, an editor of the local newspaper and the most recent a member of a suburban city council and a former president of the regional council of governments. The staff consists of seven full-time employees and another half dozen volunteers or student interns.

All staff are trained extensively. A training program of 15-20 hours is supplemented by continuing on-the-job training. The primary emphasis of the training--especially for the caseworkers who handle most of the incoming calls--is on learning community resources and office procedures to facilitate the processing of citizen contacts. The resources available to a staff member include a training manual, a resource book, and other staff professionals. The training manual is almost a self-instruction guide that covers such topics as: the purposes of the Ombudsman program, job descriptions, telephone techniques, information required in taking a case, questions that might be helpful in taking cases, procedures for handling inquiries and complaints, and office policies.

The resource book is an indispensible tool for each caseworker. It cross indexes city, county, state, federal, and other local agencies by subject areas and facilitiates the rapid handling of cases. Many of the contacts that require information or referrals can be easily processed with the use of the case book.

The Ombudsman's office is physically situated in a central downtown location. There are no site offices. Most of the citizen contacts are by telephone although some people walk in and register complaints or make requests in person. There are no requirements that complaints have to be in writing.

Well designed forms have been created to record case information. This has a number of advantages. It ensures that certain pertinent information is always collected. It facilitates record keeping and the analysis of patterns of contacts. In addition, it helps to process cases rapidly and makes it much easier to follow up cases to ensure that they have been resolved. This is especially important since the Office handles approximately 7,000 cases a year.

The JOCC is divided into two major sections--a research section and a section devoted to information and referral. This division enables the office both to process routine requests or complaints quickly and to engage in the more detailed research and investigation required to recommend more process or systemic changes in government policies, procedures or practices. These process or systemic changes are pursued either independently by the Ombudsman's office or through cooperative efforts with other groups. Over the years, the Ombudsman's office has been responsible for the introduction of a number of systemic changes dealing with as diverse a group of subjects as police ticketing practices, the burial of bodies claimed by indigents and welfare eligibility criteria. In addition, the JOCC has also issued studies and reports that serve as the focal points of advocacy on an issue.

Communication between the JOCC and the public is frequent and takes many forms. This may help to explain the very high degree of familiarity of citizens with the office as evidenced in poll results and the high level of public trust in the office.

The Office issues quarterly and yearly reports describing the activities of the Office and the pattern of complaints. Complaints and referrals, for example, are broken down by area of the city, by nature of the contact, and by the government agency.

Articles are placed in a number of area newspapers including a column in the Sunday edition of the major newspaper and using the distinctive logo designed for the office. The staff of the JOCC also works with the newspapers on feature stories. The Ombudsman appears regularly on the electronic media. This includes regular radio shows, public service announcements, and appearances on a television news program. In short, good working relationships have been developed with the print and electronic media; and the media cover the activities of the JOCC quite thoroughly.

Finally, the Ombudsman and her staff present over a hundred speaking engagements a year. Basic information about the Office is provided in brochures that have been distributed widely throughout the community and that are available at libraries, city offices, priority board offices, welcome wagons, and speaking engagements. The brochures have even been passed out to students.

Dayton's Ombudsman enjoys a great deal of independence. There is a management agreement between the Trustees and the Ombudsman guaranteeing non-interference with the operation and policy of the office. In addition, the Ombudsman can be removed only by a two-thirds vote of the Board. The diversity of funding also affords the office considerable independence. This combined with the great public exposure and public confidence that the Ombudsman has, results in considerable independence. In addition, the Ombudsman has access to all government records (except those that are personal) although the office has no subpoena power.

Dayton's Ombudsman provides a very interesting example of a well-developed, comprehensive and apparently successful complaint processing system. The success of the JOCC seems to be attributable to a number of factors, many of which were discussed in previous sections of this sub-module. These include the broad public support and awareness of the JOCC; the independence of the Ombudsman; the quality of morale, commitment, and training of the staff; the organization and operating procedures of the office; and the balance that exists between objectives and capabilities.

E. Summary

The overall goal of this sub-module is to familiarize the reader with the use of grievance processing mechanisms as a form of citizen participation. After completing this sub-module, the reader should be aware of and able to specify:

- different types of grievance processing mechanisms
- different citizen participation functions served by grievance processing mechanisms
- major design issues involved in implementing grievance processing mechanisms.

One of the most common reasons that citizens interact with government is to seek information or resolve a complaint or grievance. Because government has grown so rapidly, both in terms of size and the functions it performs, a need for specific grievance processing mechanisms has arisen in many communities.

Two major forms of grievance processing mechanisms have been distinguished: the ombudsman and the complaint bureau. Though both may perform similar functions, they differ most with respect to how they are established and how much independence they have. The ombudsman is normally established by the legislature or is provided for explicitly in a municipality's charter or constitution and has great independence. A complaint bureau (or executive ombudsman) is an administrative unit of government, established by and answerable to the chief administrative officer of a municipality. As a result, the complaint bureau or executive ombudsman has less independence than a genuine ombudsman or "citizens' defender."

Grievance processing mechanisms can potentially impact on four functions of citizen participation. What an individual mechanism can accomplish is dependent upon how it is organized; the quality, commitment and training of its staff; the amount of public awareness it has; and the image it has in the community and in the government. The following provides a general summary of how grievance processing mechanisms relate to the four functions of citizen participation.

- Information--Grievance processing mechanisms can be used to collect information from citizens. This information deals primarily with citizen requests for information or for assistance in getting services or resolving complaints. If it is systematically collected and analyzed, this information can be used to improve governmental efficiency and effectiveness by identifying policies, programs, personnel, and procedures that are causing citizens to register complaints. These mechanisms can also be used to disseminate information to citizens to help make them better informed.

- Accessibility--Grievance processing mechanisms improve citizens' access to government. Either the citizen is helped to contact the appropriate person in government who can help him with his problem or request, or he is provided with an advocate who helps him get through to the agency or person in government he wishes to contact. Thus, grievance processing mechanisms facilitate citizen access to government.

- Involvement--Grievance processing mechanisms help citizens to influence how they are treated by government. In this way they may feel more involved in government. In addition, if their contact with government is productive, their feeling of involvement in government is likely to increase.

- Accountability--Grievance processing mechanisms are powerful instruments of accountability. Because they can follow up on complaints and publicize those instances where government has not been responsive, because they can help to cut through red tape and put citizens in direct contact with those government agencies or personnel who have responsibility for or over their problem, and because they can focus public attention on the performance record of government, grievance processing mechanisms can be very effective in promoting government accountability.

If they are to operate successfully and serve as effective citizen participation mechanisms, grievance processing mechanisms must be carefully designed and implemented. In this submodule a number of important design issues have been discussed. These include:

- Independence/Autonomy--The independence a grievance processing mechanism has can influence its effectiveness. Independent grievance processors are likely to be more effective in dealing with government bureaucracies because they have more power. They are also likely to be more trusted by citizens and given more support by citizens than if they are perceived as having no autonomy or power. This will also tend to make more people contact them with their requests or complaints. The only major disadvantage of independence is that it may lead to a situation in which the complaint processor is isolated from government and not responsive to citizen needs--however, this can be avoided if appropriate communication activities are pursued.

- Degree of Centralization--Centralized complaint processing systems are easier to coordinate and publicize than decentralized ones. However, if service delivery in a city is highly decentralized, then decentralized complaint processing units have some advantages. In addition, decentralized units may help to overcome the fear and distrust of citizens about contacting government for assistance in areas where that is a problem.

- Jurisdiction/Scope of Authority--The matters that a grievance processing mechanism has jurisdiction over and the range of activities in which it engages should be closely related to the purposes it is designed to serve.

- Staffing and Organization--Grievance processing mechanisms typically handle large volumes of citizen contacts. In addition, they have direct contact with citizens under conditions where citizens have some problem with government. For these reasons it is essential that any grievance processing operation is efficiently operated and well managed--requests and complaints must be processed successfully and quickly. It is also essential that grievance processing staff are well trained, have a good knowledge of government, and are committed to helping citizens.

- Style of Operation--The style of operation of a grievance processing mechanism also impacts on its success. Included under style of operation are such things as how the role of the mechanism is perceived and whether outreach programs are used. Style of operation impacts on the public's awareness of and perception of the grievance processing mechanism and should be related to the purposes the mechanism is intended to serve.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION MECHANISMS:
SURVEYS

The overall goal of this submodule is to promote understanding of how survey research could be used as a citizen participation mechanism and of what design issues need to be considered in implementation. After completing this module, the reader should be more aware of and be able to specify:

- different functions of survey;
- different types of information that could be obtained from a survey;
- major design factors affecting the success of survey research as a citizen participation mechanism;
- different types of surveys and the advantages and disadvantages of each type;
- how one can make inferences about the opinions of the entire population by interviewing a subset; and
- steps involved in designing a survey.

SURVEYS

A. Introduction

Many of the previous mechanisms covered in this module gather information from citizens in some way. For example, public hearings can elicit citizen opinions, suggestions, or complaints about a certain issue. Mini-city halls can sensitize local governments to the service needs of a specific population group in a city. Complaint bureaus or ombudsmen can help a local government not only to deal with a specific complaint from a city, but also to use that information to improve service delivery. Thus, all of these mechanisms can collect information concerning citizens' views about certain issues or programs.

However, few of these sources can provide information that is representative of the entire community. That is, one may find out the beliefs of people who attend a public hearing or who contact a mini-city hall, but there is no assurance that their views represent the views of all the people who live in a community.

Another way to obtain information from citizens is to conduct a survey. By carefully following certain scientific procedures, a sample of people can be selected in a locality whose views will be representative of the population as a whole within a known error range. Surveys can obtain information about a citizen's attitudes, opinions, aspirations, and needs. If certain scientific procedures are followed in selecting a sample, a survey can be an unbiased citizen participation mechanism in which all types of people are proportionately included. Of all the citizen participation mechanisms that have been discussed, it is the only way to obtain statistically reliable and valid information concerning what the entire population thinks about a certain issue.

In addition, survey information can be analyzed in a number of different ways. For example, by putting this information on a computer, it is possible to examine the opinions of different types of people--such as different income or racial groups--and it is possible to find out the views of people from different areas of town. Surveys are a form of citizen participation that have been used, with varying degrees of success, in a number of large, medium and small cities including Albuquerque; Atlanta; Chicago; Columbus; Dayton; Detroit; Sioux City, Iowa; and Zeeland, Michigan.

B. Functions

1. Overview

As a citizen participation mechanism, surveys can be used for a variety of broad functions. The functions or purposes served by a survey obviously depend upon the types of questions asked and the way the information is used. Of the four functions of citizen participation used in this curriculum--the information, accessibility, accountability, and involvement functions--surveys relate directly to the information function, and indirectly to the accountability and involvement functions. Surveys relate only tangentially to the accessibility function.

The primary purpose of surveys is to collect information from citizens. As was noted in the introduction to this submodule, surveys provide information that is representative of the entire community. However, in contrast to other citizen participation mechanisms that can collect information, surveys are not used to disseminate information.

Surveys can indirectly be used to promote accountability. By publicizing the results of surveys and using them to evaluate and make programmatic decisions, one can improve the accountability and trust of local government. However, the extent to which accountability is promoted is dependent on the willingness of local officials to use the information to evaluate governmental performance.

In addition, surveys can promote the involvement of citizens--although in a limited way. Citizen involvement consists primarily in answering questions contained on the survey. This is a passive form of involvement, and is restricted to those people randomly chosen in the sample. However, this citizen involvement can have a definite impact if local officials are willing to use the information to evaluate, modify and plan governmental operations.

And finally, surveys are not very effective in promoting the accessibility of local officials. A survey does not provide direct face-to-face contact between local officials and citizens. Accessibility is promoted only to the extent that by answering questions on a survey, citizens can potentially have an input into governmental planning and evaluation. Thus, in an indirect way, citizens have gained access to the decisionmaking process.

The use of citizen surveys in Washington, D.C. to evaluate the cleanliness of neighborhood streets illustrates how surveys can be a form of citizen participation.[1] Washington, D.C. divided the city into sections, and used citizen surveys and trained observers to periodically evaluate the cleanliness of neighborhood streets. When this monitoring system located trouble spots, the appropriate officials were notified to improve service delivery. This process provided information that was used to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of street cleaning because it monitored present street conditions in order that corrective actions could be targeted to the appropriate section of town. Employees were aware that street conditions were being evaluated. This promoted an increased concern with the quality of service delivery, and an increased sense of accountability. This monitoring system involved citizens in the evaluation of governmental services allowing the local government to be responsive to the needs citizens had for clean streets. Because this process demonstrated governmental concern with the quality of service delivery, it promoted citizen trust that the government was conscientiously performing its duties, and was concerned about the opinions of residents.

Of all these functions, surveys are first and foremost techniques for collecting information. Because of this, the next few sections examine in detail the types of information that can be collected on a survey and discuss some of the limitations of survey data.

2. Types of Information

a. Measure the Level of Citizen Knowledge and Awareness

Many governmental programs such as recreation, recycling of waste products, health clinics, and crime prevention depend upon the voluntary participation of citizens. Thus, in order to use these programs, citizens must be aware of their existence, and have some information regarding their operation.

Citizen surveys can discover how many people have heard of a certain program. Governmental officials can use this information to decide if stronger educational campaigns need to be implemented, and thus, lead to greater utilization of the services.

In measuring levels of awareness, the following types of questions could be asked:

- Have the respondents ever heard of the different services or programs?
- Have the respondents ever used any of these services or programs?
- If they have not used some service, why not?
- Would they know how to get a particular service if they needed it?

For example, a major city implemented a program to mark consumer items with the owner's social security number. The police department provided this service for free; however, few people brought in their items. A citizen survey showed that very few people were aware of the program. This alerted the police department to increase the publicity of the program, which resulted in an increased level of utilization.

b. Determine Degree of Consensus and Predict How Citizens Might React to New Initiatives

Governments often face controversial decisions, and political feasibility affects their actions. Citizen surveys can be used to estimate how many people support or oppose a specific policy. In many cases public officials may find more support (or opposition) then they anticipated.

For example, a large metropolitan area in the U.S. was considering curb side pickup of garbage. Even though such a change would have saved a great deal of money, local officials felt too much public hostility existed towards curb side pickup. The following questions were asked on a survey of area citizens:

- Compared to curb side pickup, how important is carryout trash service to you personally--very important, somewhat important, or not very important?

    1. Very important
    2. Somewhat important
    3. Not very important

- The cost to the City to provide carryout trash service is about $7.60 per year for each household. If the Federal money which currently pays for this cost were no longer available, would you be willing to pay the $7.60 per year for carryout service, or would you rather not have the service provided?

    1. Would pay $7.60 per year
    2. Would not want the service
    3. Would still want service, but paid for from existing tax revenues

Figure 3 shows the results for these questions. From these responses, one sees that carryout service is very important to only 30% of the population. In addition only 16% say that the service is very important, and that they would be willing to pay the small sum of $7.60 per year to maintain this service. Thus, the results from this survey showed little enthusiasm for carryout service. This information corrected a misinterpretation of public attitudes.

c. Problem Identification and Needs Assessment

Citizen surveys can be used for fact finding and diagnosis of problems. A survey can help local officials understand aspects of a problem and formulate a response.

Figure 3: Results of Questions Dealing With Carryout Service

Importance of Carryout Service	
1. Very Important	30%
2. Somewhat Important	18
3. Not Very Important	52
	100%

Willingness to Pay For Service	
1. Would pay $7.60	30%
2. Wouldn't Want Service	49
3. Pay For From Taxes	21
	100%

The following is a cross tabulation of the results from these two questions.

How Important	Willingness to Pay For Service		
	Pay $7.60/yr.	Would Not Want Service	Pay From Existing Revenues
Very Important	16%[1]	4	10
Somewhat Important	7	7	5
Not Very Important	8	38	7

---

[1] Percentage figured on total percent.

For example, unreported crime is perceived as a problem in a community. However, it is not known how much crime goes unreported, or why people do not report it. This information can be obtained by asking people on a survey whether or not they or someone in their household have been victimized, and have not reported it to the police. In addition, the survey could ask why the individual did not report the crime. On the basis of information from these questions, one could estimate the extent of unreported crime and the reasons for not reporting. This could provide clues concerning the corrective action the police department might take to eliminate barriers to reporting crime.

Citizen surveys can also provide information concerning citizen needs for services. Thus, officials can find out if a specific service should be added, expanded, decreased, or eliminated. Needs assessment can be done in two different ways. Citizens could be asked directly if they need a certain service or the need for a certain service could be inferred on the basis of other questions.

For example, a city is considering whether or not to expand their support for child care centers. While a number of factors affect this decision, one of them is whether or not there is a need for new or expanded day-care centers. Figure 4 contains a series of questions that could provide valuable information for the city's decision. Figure 5 presents a list of hypothetical results to these questions. From this listing, one finds the following important facts:

- Eight percent (8%) of the population has a need for child care, but does not currently receive it.
- Most of these people would use child-care centers.
- The reasons cited for not using child care centers are because of the cost, and because people are unemployed.
- Only 15% of the people said they had had problems getting or keeping a job because of lack of adequate child-care services.

From this information one sees that there is a need for child care that is not being met, and most of these people would prefer to place their children in child-care centers. However, the reasons cited for not using child-care services are cost and unemployment, not trouble in finding space within the day-care center system. In addition, only 15% say they have had problems getting or keeping a job because of a lack of adequate child-care services. This suggests that there is more of a need for assistance in helping people find jobs than in providing more child-care slots.

This example provides a brief overview of how one could use survey research for a needs assessment. We have discussed a simple analysis that could be made in examining whether there is a need for more child-care centers. More analysis could be performed with these

FIGURE 4: Child Care Needs Assessment

1. Do you presently use any type of child care services other than occasional babysitting?

   a. Yes
   b. No--If "No"

If "Yes"

What type of child care services do you use?

a. Daily--all day
b. Daily--for a few hours
c. Part-time--but all day
d. Part-time--for a few hours, but on a regular basis

Who provides those child care services?

a. Day-care center
b. Relative
c. Neighbor
d. Friend
e. Private mother
f. Other ______________
(Please specify)

In general, how satisfied are you with your present child-care arrangements? Are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?

a. Very satisfied
b. Somewhat satisfied
c. Somewhat dissatisfied
d. Very dissatisfied

What is it about your present child-care arrangements that makes you satisfied or dissatisfied?

____

____

____

____

____

Do you have a need for some type of child-care services, other than occasional babysitting?

a. Yes--If "Yes"
b. No

What type of child-care services would you need?

a. Daily--all day
b. Daily--for a few hours
c. Part-time--but all day
d. Part-time--for a few hours, but on a regular basis

Who would you prefer to provide those child-care services?

a. Day-care center
b. Relative
c. Neighbor
d. Friend
e. Private mother
f. Other ______________
(Please specify)

Why are you not presently using child-care services?

____

____

____

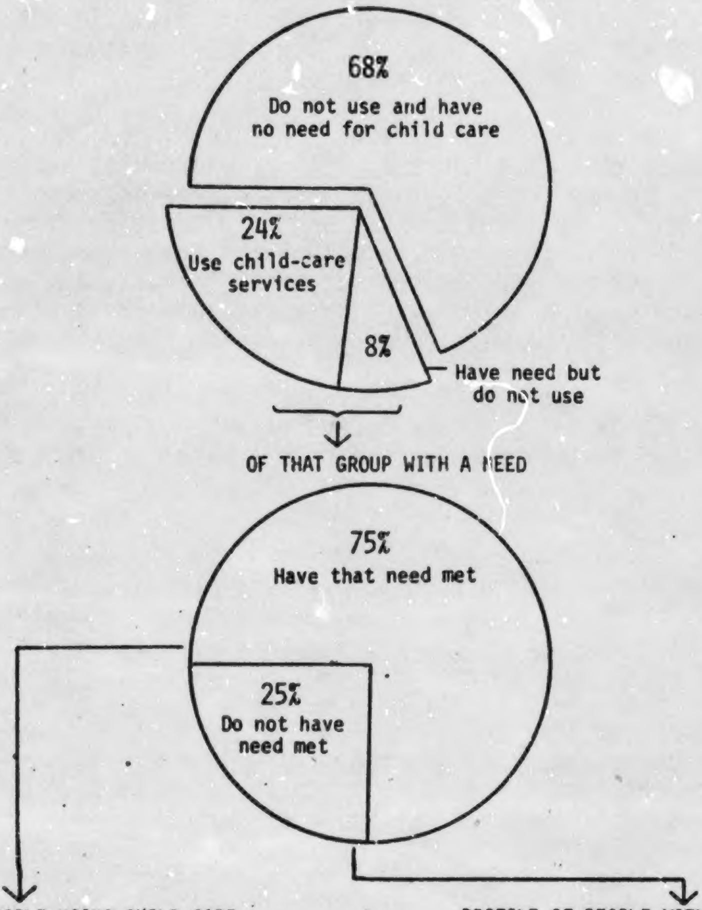
____

____

In the last year have you ever had problems getting or keeping a job because of lack of adequate child-care services?

a. Yes
b. No

FIGURE 5: Hypothetical Results for Child-Care Needs Assessment



PROFILE OF PEOPLE USING CHILD CARE

A. What Type of Child-Care Use

Daily--all day	67%
Daily--few hours	11
Part-time--few hours	22
	100%

B. Who Provides

Day-care center	60%
Relative	20
Friend	20
	100%

C. How Satisfied With Present Arrangements

Very satisfied	63%
Somewhat satisfied	25
Somewhat dissatisfied	0
Very dissatisfied	12
	100%

D. Why?

Positive:	Generally get good care Good hours Good supervision
Negative:	Inconvenient hour

PROFILE OF PEOPLE WITH UNMET CHILD-CARE NEED

A. What Type is Needed

Daily--all day	33%
Part-time--few hours on regular basis	67
	100%

B. Who Would They Want

Day-care center	90%
Relative	10
	100%

C. Why Are They Not Presently Using Child Care?

Cost	33%
Unemployed	67
	100%

D. Problems Getting or Keeping a Job Because of Lack of Adequate Child-Care Services

Yes	15%
No	85
	100%

questions. For example, by employing the figure that 8% of the households in the city have a need for child care, census data can be used to roughly estimate the number of people and the number of children represented in those households. However, this example illustrates how survey research can be used for conducting needs assessment by directly asking citizens about their needs.

In addition, the needs of the citizens could be inferred on the basis of other questions. Thus, in the child care example, one could ask questions on the number of children 5 years of age or younger who live in the household, on marital status, and on occupation. On the basis of this information, one could calculate the number of families who have children 5 years of age or younger where there is a single parent or where both parents work. This provides some indication of the overall need for child care.

Whichever method is used, citizen surveys can help a local government assess the needs of their populace, and provide valuable information for planning and justifying reductions or expansions of services.

d. Evaluation

Citizen surveys can also be used to evaluate programs, policies, and service delivery. Thus, citizens could evaluate the cleanliness of their streets, the adequacy of street lights in their neighborhood, the efficiency of storm sewers, and the condition of neighborhood parks. However, citizens should only be asked to evaluate those programs and services with which they are familiar. Thus, while citizens could be asked how torn up their streets are, or how effective are the storm sewers on their street, it is not appropriate for them to evaluate the efficiency of the city's financial reporting system.

In addition, citizen surveys could provide information concerning trends in service delivery; that is, are things getting better or getting worse. This can be done by asking the respondent if conditions are better, worse, or about the same as they were 5 years ago.

e. Prioritization

Relying upon citizens to set budget priorities is difficult because they may not know the potential trade-offs in funding one type of service over another. However, it is possible to determine what citizen priorities might be, and use this to contribute to, but not substitute for, political and managerial judgment.

For example, citizens could be presented with a list of services that are familiar to them (such as police protection, fire protection, parks and recreation, etc.), and then asked which service needs more money or which service should be decreased. Figure 6 presents a series of questions that could provide information concerning budget priorities.

FIGURE 6: Sample Questions Concerning Budget Priorities

If you had to recommend changes in the amount of available tax money spent for the following services, and spending more on one service meant you would have to spend less on another service, on which one service would you like to see spending increased?

A. 1 - Police protection
2 - Fire protection
3 - Parks and recreation facilities
4 - Street repair and maintenance
5 - Garbage collection and disposal
6 - Public health services
7 - No change
9 - DK/NA

Now, which would you like to see cut back?

B. 1 - Police protection
2 - Fire protection
3 - Parks and recreation facilities
4 - Street repair and maintenance
5 - Garbage collection and disposal
6 - Public health services
7 - No change
9 - DK/NA

f. Limitation on the Usefulness of Surveys

While citizen surveys can collect information about citizens' attitudes, opinions, aspirations, and needs, there are potential limitations on the usefulness of surveys.

Survey results are valid and useful only if care is used in the production phases. Technical aspects of a survey are discussed at length later in this submodule. However, it is important that a professional in survey research be involved to ensure the technical quality of the survey. Many things could bias the results of the survey, and without a sound knowledge of survey research principles, the results could be disastrous.

The results of surveys should be used in conjunction with other valid information sources. While citizen surveys can produce information that is not available from other sources, rarely will this data be sufficient for decisionmaking. Survey data should compliment other data sources and managerial or political judgment.

The usefulness of information from surveys depends partly upon the respondent's level of awareness and information. Citizens should be questioned only about things with which they are familiar. This limits the range of appropriate topics.

The accuracy of citizen opinions also depends in part upon the nature of the issue. For example, if the issue is new or not very salient, citizen opinions might be very unstable and easily subject to change.

Survey results might be affected by major events occurring while the interviews are being conducted, or after the interviews have been completed. For example, a survey asks questions concerning how satisfied the respondent is with the operation of the police department. During the interviewing process a major scandal occurs in the police department. One can expect that this scandal will have an impact on citizen opinions. Thus, those citizens interviewed before the scandal was publicized would be expected to have more positive views than those people interviewed after the scandal. Unless the opinions of these people are separated, interpreting the results is very difficult.

In addition, if the scandal had occurred after all the interviews had been conducted, one might expect a change in some of the people who had expressed positive feelings towards the operation of the police department. Thus, the results from the survey would no longer accurately reflect present feelings toward police.

Finally, on the basis of survey results, it is very difficult to predict behavior accurately. One of the most visible well-publicized activities of survey researchers is predicting election outcomes. In many cases these predictions are very accurate. However, election predictions are unique because respondents have had time to think about for whom they will vote. If a person is asked how they will act if a certain situation arises--such as will they use tennis courts if they are included in a new recreational complex--the respondent may provide an inaccurate answer because they have not really thought about what their actions would be.

The best way to handle this type of question is to ask how likely (e.g., very likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, not at all likely) it is that the respondent would use the tennis courts. This wording allows a determination of the likelihood a respondent will behave in a certain way.

C. Implementation and Major Design Issues

This section provides an overview of considerations involved in implementing a citizen survey. Generally, three major considerations affect the development of a successful survey:

- A professional survey researcher advises the city on all phases of the survey process.
- A good deal of work is spent in the early stages of the survey process deciding what information is needed from the survey, and how that information might be used in planning and decisionmaking.
- The results are analyzed and reported in a timely and clear fashion which facilitates understanding and promotes utilization.

The next few paragraphs cover the steps involved in the survey process and examine the important design considerations in each step.

1. Purpose of Survey

At the beginning of the process, it is important to determine what information is needed from the survey, and how this information will be used. Without an explicit purpose, no criteria exists by which to judge whether a certain question should or should not be included. While it is tempting to include questions that provide information that is "nice to know", rarely is this information useful in making decisions or analyzing problems.

After an understanding has been reached concerning the kind of information needed, one should decide whether or not a survey should be conducted. Not all questions are best answered by means of a survey. One should determine whether the desired information is available from other sources, or if it should be collected in a different manner.

2. What Type of Survey--Mail, Telephone, Personal

A variety of issues affect what type of survey should be used--mail, telephone, personal, or some combination. Each carries advantages and disadvantages, and is best suited to different kinds of questioning. Mail interviews are relatively inexpensive, and are primarily useful for interviewing people who have moderate or high levels of education, or for cases where a good listing exists of potential respondents. For example, a city may have a listing of people who have made complaints about city services. These people could receive a mail questionnaire to determine if they have received satisfaction regarding their complaint. Disadvantages of a mail survey are: 1) the relatively small number of questionnaires usually returned; 2) the limited number of questions that can be asked; 3) the length of time it takes for people to return questionnaires; and, 4) restrictions regarding the type of questions that can be asked (e.g., visuals cannot be used). In addition, questions have to be very clear and unambiguous because an interviewer is not present to assist the respondent in interpreting the questionnaire.

Telephone interviews are more flexible than mail questionnaires. Telephone interviews achieve a relatively good response rate and a fast turnaround. In addition, a variety of types of questions can be asked. Sampling problems are relatively easy to deal with, and through a set of technical procedures, respondents can be located geographically within the city. While a telephone interview biases the sample against people who do not have telephones, the demographic characteristics of people without telephones are known. Consequently, the survey results can be weighted to compensate for any bias that appears. By using a sampling technique called random digit dialing, a sample can be produced which includes people with unlisted telephone numbers.

Personal interviews provide the most flexibility in asking questions because visuals can be used, more questions can be asked, and a good deal of rapport can be established between the interviewer and respondent, allowing for more sensitive questions to be asked. In addition, there is usually a high response rate from personal interviews, although this has been decreasing in recent years. However, this type of survey is very expensive, requires a good deal of control in guiding a field staff in the administration of the questionnaire and takes a relatively long time to administer. Figure 5 provides an overview of some of the issues involved in deciding what type of survey to administer. Deciding what type of survey best fits a specific situation should be answered in close consultation with a professional in the field of survey research.

Early in the survey process, a professional survey researcher should be contacted to help design and execute the survey. Survey research abounds with technical issues and problems, and while local governmental officials can develop an understanding of survey research, many technical questions exist that require a professional survey researcher. This person should be contacted at the beginning of the survey process because many of the early decisions affect the entire process.

FIGURE 7: Comparative Assessment of Alternative Survey Methods*

	CRITERIA							
Interview Methods	Average Costs	Response Rate Ranges	Data Recovery Time	Rapport	Call Back/ Follow-Up	Weather	Normal Length	Types of Information Collected
Telephone	$10-25 per completed interview	40-75% in urban areas 50-85% in rural areas	Immediate. Recovery time limited only by number of interviews, interviewers, and length of instrument.	Moderate	Easy, low cost, quick	Not relevant	10-30 minutes	Best for closed-ended questions and short series.
Personal	$20-30 per completed interview	50-80% in urban areas 70-85% in rural areas	Moderate. Turn around time lengthened by travel time, call backs, and identification and search for respondents.	High	Difficult and costly, slow	Relevant	15-45 minutes	Any kind--allows use of visual aids and hands-on participation by respondent.
Mail	$2.50-6.00 per interview	20-40% for mass publics 40-75% for elites	Long. Delays of several weeks are typical.	Low	Easy, moderately costly, very slow	Not relevant	10-20 minutes	Almost any kind--best for less complicated information since no interviewer to answer questions.
ADVANTAGE	MAIL	PERSONAL	TELEPHONE	PERSONAL	TELEPHONE	TELEPHONE/MAIL	PERSONAL	---

*Dennis K. Benson and Jonathon L. Benson, A Guide to Survey Research Terms (Columbus, Ohio: Academy for Contemporary Problems, 1975).

ADVANTAGE SUMMARY

Mail - 2
Personal - 3
Telephone - 3

The next few sections cover aspects of the survey process in which the professional survey research will be most heavily involved. The purpose of these sections is not to make the reader an expert who is skilled in answering these questions, but rather to provide an overview of these steps involved, and to familiarize the reader with how the process might be structured.

3. Designing the Questionnaire

Designing a questionnaire involves much more than simply writing a few questions. A few of the considerations which affect the results obtained are: 1) the order of the questions; 2) the placing and wording of transition statements; 3) the type of question (close-ended, where all the possible responses are provided, or open-ended, where the possible answers are not provided); 4) the phrasing of clear, unbiased questions; and, 5) the format of the questionnaire. All of these issues affect the quality of the questionnaire and require professional guidance.

Generally, local officials specify exactly what type of information if needed, and a professional survey researcher constructs the actual questions to obtain that information. Constructing the questionnaire is difficult because questions must accurately measure those things for which they were designed, and must not "lead" the respondent into making a certain response. Local officials should review the questionnaire once it has been written. This not only ensures that the consultant produces a useful quetionnaire, but also promotes the utilization of that information once it is collected. It is important that people who will use the results are involved in designing the questionnaire.

In addition, if established citizen groups exist in the city, officials might consider involving them in the design process. Some cities that have used citizen surveys have encountered hostility from established citizens' groups because these groups feel their own opinions will be challenged by the survey results. This hostility might be reduced by allowing these groups to suggest possible topic areas that could be included in the survey.

And finally, surveys can gather information related to only one substantive area (such as crime), or they can include a wide variety of substantive areas. Generally, the latter situation has been more common.

4. Sampling

At the same time the questionnaire is being constructed a sampling frame can be set up; that is, the method used to select people to be interviewed. The type of procedure that is developed depends upon the type of survey (mail, telephone, or personal), and upon the nature of the population or the group of people from which the sample is to be chosen.

The basic assumption of survey research is that by carefully following certain scientific procedures, one can make inferences about a large group of people (a population) by interviewing a relatively small number of individuals selected from the larger group (s sample). While a number of considerations affect the accuracy of that inference, major ones are the method of selecting people to interview (i.e., method of drawing the sample), and the size of the group to be interviewed (i.e., sample size).

There are many ways to select a sample of people to be interviewed. To guarantee the accuracy of the results, every person in the group or population must have a chance of being selected. From probability theory it is known that if one chooses elements (such as households) from a population randomly, the set of elements chosen will reflect the characteristics of the whole group within some error range determined by the number chosen. For example, in a city having 8,000 whites and 2,000 non-whites, a random sample of 400 should have about 320 whites and 80 non-whites.

Whether the sample reflects the characteristics of that larger population or group is also dependent upon the number of people that are chosen. Starting with a sample of one person and then increasing the sample size, the accuracy of the sample will improve rapidly up to a certain number, around 500, after which one needs a large increase in the number of people being interviewed in order to increase the accuracy of the sample. Figure 6 shows the relationship between sample size and error.

Admittedly, this has been a simplified discussion. The theory of sampling is well grounded in the mathematics of probability. The size of the sample and the way the sample is selected are keys to understanding how one is able to draw inferences about the opinions of a large number of people from interviewing a small number. Generally, these are decisions with which the professional survey researcher can be of assistance.

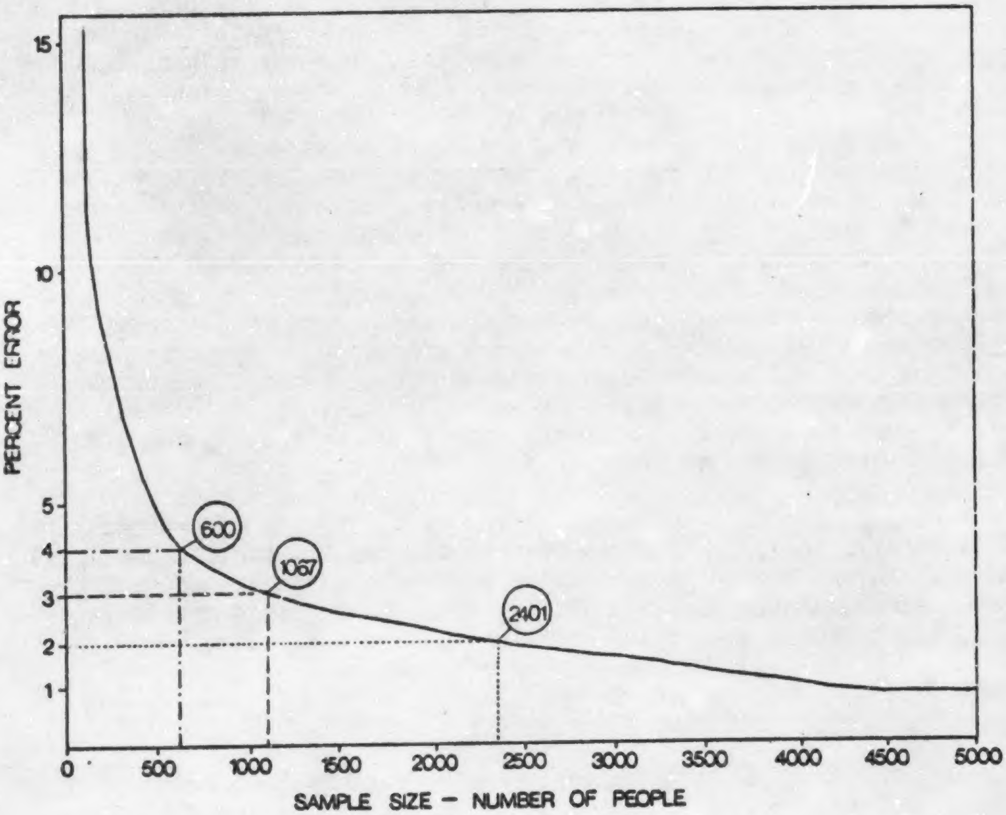
5. Field Work and Data Reduction

Actually conducting the interviews, and then putting them into machine readable form is primarily the responsibility of the consultants. Interviewing is usually a large operation and requires a great deal of coordination between the survey design staff and field staff. When the completed interviews come into the office, the survey staff punches the material from the code sheets onto computer cards. All the interviews are usually punched in this manner so that the results may be calculated by computer.

6. Reporting the Results

Once the data has been collected and punched, the results of the survey can be tabulated. It is important that the people who are going

FIGURE 8: Relationship Between Sample Size and Percent Error



to use the information are involved in the writing of reports. Survey data can be presented in a number of different ways, and how it is presented affects its utility. For example, it is possible that the overall results to a question concerning the condition of a neighborhood's streets shows that 65% of the people in the city are very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the condition of streets in their neighborhood. However, when responses are broken down by various areas of town, it is found that 60% of the people in the west side are very or somewhat dissatisfied with the condition of the neighborhood streets. This allows local government to identify a problem and to plan ameliorative actions. Consequently, the information becomes much more useful when broken down by area of town. Thus, it is important that city personnel work with the consultant in analyzing the survey results.

In addition, local officials might consider making the data set from the survey accessible to others in the community. Of course, the interest that nonlocal governmental officials have in this data depends upon the questions that were asked. However, in many cases this information has broad applicability, and the impact can be greatly increased by allowing others access to the data for their own purposes.

In addition to providing access to the data set, the governmental officials might also consider disseminating the results through the local news media. This not only helps people learn more about the views prevalent in their community, but also builds trust that government is interested in, and takes action on, the opinions of their citizens.

7. Cost

Surveys can be relatively expensive. The cost will vary depending upon the length of a questionnaire and the extent of involvement by a survey research firm. Generally a 20-25 minute telephone survey would cost $10-25 per completed interview; a personal interview would cost $20-45 per completed interview and a mail survey might cost $3-6 per completed interview.

D. Case Study

1. Overview

Toledo, Ohio (population 400,000) conducted a multi-service citizen survey in June, 1976. The purpose of the survey was to increase citizen participation in needs assessment and the evaluation of city services. Planning for the project began in late November, 1975 and the data was analyzed in August, 1976. The project included departmental work sessions, a workshop for department and division heads concerning the uses of survey research, informal discussions with city council members, 2,401 telephone interviews with Toledo residents, a briefing on the results to city council members and members of Toledo's Citizen Forum, and the writing of a summary report. Technical assistance in all phases of the survey process was provided by specialists in survey research from a state assisted university. The out of pocket cost was approximately $6,000.

2. Basic Parameters of the Survey

To supplement information gathered from Toledo's six area councils and the forty-member Citizen's Forum, the City Manager proposed an ongoing survey of Toledo residents. Information from the survey was used to evaluate city services and to set priorities for the next year's program budget. The Director of Management Services had responsibility for coordinating the conduction of the survey. Through an arrangement with a statewide consortium of cities of which Toledo was a member, professional services from experts at a state assisted university were acquired at no cost to the city.

Beginning in late November, 1975, a series of meetings were held between the consultants and the Director of Management Services in order to determine the parameters of the survey and consider overall design issues--from sampling and questionnaire design to dissemination and utilization. Final decisions concerning the survey parameters were made in February, 1976, and included the following:

- Geographic area. The options considered were: 1) the city limits of Toledo; and 2) the Toledo urbanized area, or the county. Since the survey was aimed primarily at those people served by Toledo city government, the city limits defined the geographic boundaries of the survey population.

- Sample Size. Two considerations were important in determining the sample size: 1) a margin of error that would facilitate the planning of city services and the allocation of resources; and 2) the ability to execute sub-area analysis of the data. A sample size of 2,401 adult residents (18 years old and older) was chosen because it provided sufficient accuracy as well as enough respondents for a real analysis.

- Scope of the Survey. Consideration was given to whether the survey should cover a wide range of substantive areas or concentrate on one broad area and cover a number of concerns within that area. The latter option was chosen and community development was selected as the general area for consideration. Within community development, a number of concerns were addressed; for example, social services, public safety (both police and fire), channels for citizen participation, parks and recreation, housing, downtown development, capital improvements, and neighborhood preservation and planning. Standard demographic questions such as race, sex, income, education, occupation and age were also included.

- Mode. Consideration was given to personal, mail, and telephone as survey modes. Personal interviews would require a tremendous amount of field coordination and were expensive--$50-75 per interview. Cost considerations eliminated this option. A mail questionnaire was the least expensive mode, but the scope and complexity of the substantive areas to be covered made using a mail questionnaire unfeasible. A random digit dial telephone survey was selected as the most appropriate mode. Telephone interviewing allowed for the anticipated scope and complexity of the survey's subject matter at a very reasonable cost--$8-9 per interview. Random digit dialing was used as the method for selecting the actual phone numbers. This eliminated the biases associated with phone book samples--unlisted numbers, the loss of highly mobile people, and the fact that most phone books are about 18 percent out of date the day they are issued.

- Length of the Survey. In order to stay within budgetary constraints, a time limit of approximately 20-25 minutes was established for the administration of the questionnaire. This would allow for an average completion rate of two interviews per hour for each interviewer.

3. User Orientation

Because this was the first time the City of Toledo had conducted a survey, a workshop dealing with the usefulness of survey research for policymaking was developed and presented in late January, 1976, to all department and division heads. The purpose of the workshop was to familiarize the participants with:

- how the survey research process operates;
- how survey research has been used in other cities as part of the policymaking process; and
- how personnel in Toledo city government could use survey research.

Further orientation was given to interested participants through informal discussions with council members before council meetings and through a presentation in mid-July to the Toledo Citizens' Forum.

4. Questionnaire Design

A decision was made by the City Manager in consultation with the Director of Community Development to focus the basic content of the survey on issues related to community development. The questionnaire was designed and developed through an iterative process. In mid-March, 1976, a series of meetings were held with various department and division heads in order to identify the kind of information they wanted from the survey. Among those participating were: the City Manager, Assistant City Manager, Director of Community Development, Management Services Officer, Director of the Safety Department, Fire Chief, Police Chief, Director of the Service Department, and the Commissioner of Housing and Relocation, Human Resources, Renewal Operations, and Parks and Recreation. Prior to the meetings, each person received either draft questions related to their particular area, or a worksheet that was intended to provide examples of the type of information that could be generated for their area of interest.

These initial meetings were used to get a sense for what information was needed by each person and just how that information would be used. Reactions to the questions that had already been drafted were also sought. A draft questionnaire was then produced and copies sent to all those who participated in the earlier meeting. After allowing time for review, another series of meetings were held to discuss revisions--rewordings, additions, deletions. The draft of the questionnaire that was produced as a result of this review process was then given to the City Manager, Director of Community Development, and Management Services Officer with guidelines as to how many questions had to be cut in order to meet the 20-25 minute interview time requirement. The final draft of the questionnaire contained 106 substantive questions and 14 demographic questions.

In addition to the input of the various department and division heads, two days were set aside in mid-April for meetings with any members of the City Council who wanted an opportunity to talk with the consultants about the survey process and provide input to the questionnaire.

When the ordinance for the survey came before the City Council, one member did object to the survey in general and asked for the inclusion of a number of "citizen awareness/level of information" questions. A series of alternative questions to those presented by the council member were drafted and a meeting scheduled to discuss his objections. While this meeting did not change the council member's mind about the lack of need and utility of such a survey, he did not vote against the survey ordinance when it next came before the entire council.

5. Field Operation

Since the execution of surveys was to be an occasional occurrence in Toledo (once or twice a year), it would not have been cost-beneficial to develop and train an "in-house" interviewing staff. Consequently, a decision was made to contract a local firm to conduct the interviews and keypunch the data.

In December, 1975, a series of discussions were held with two survey research firms in Toledo. Both companies were asked to submit bids for handling the field operations aspect of the survey. In addition, the consultants visited both companies to view their operations first hand and discuss the survey. After these meetings, one of the firms was awarded the contract and conducted the interview during June and July, 1976.

6. Dissemination and Utilization

In mid-July, 1976, the necessary programs for computer analysis were written and analysis of the data begun. At the August 31 meeting of the City Council a summary report was presented and several members indicated support for the continuation of the Toledo Area Social Profile.

Due to a lack of staff to facilitate the process, the dissemination and utilization of the survey results was not as systematic as planned during the design stages of the survey. Each department or division had to rely on their own staff to interpret and determine how to use the data.

While use of the survey data has not been as widespread as hoped, indications are that city officials are paying attention to the opinions expressed through the survey. For example, one problem that surfaced repeatedly throughout the survey was public dissatisfaction with the street repair and maintenance. In response to this dissatisfaction, one of the overall objectives listed under Community and Economic Development in Programmed Objectives 1977--Toledo, Ohio states the intention "to utilize the results of the public opinion survey for the planning of street improvements." Further, the Division of Housing and Relocation has a performance objective that reads, "to incorporate the results of citizen opinion surveys dealing with housing into planning strategies for current and future years."

E. Summary

The overall goal of this submodule is to promote understanding of how survey research could be used as a citizen participation mechanism and of what design issues need to be considered in implementation. After completing this module, the reader should be more aware of and be able to specify:

- different functions of a survey;
- different types of information that could be obtained from a survey;
- major design factors affecting the success of survey research as a citizen participation mechanism;
- different types of surveys and the advantages and disadvantages of each type;
- how one can make inferences about the opinions of the entire population by interviewing a subset; and
- steps involved in designing a survey.

Of the four functions of citizen participation, surveys relate directly to the information function and indirectly to the accountability, involvement and accessibility function.

Surveys are an effective technique for collecting information that is representative of the opinions of the entire community. Information from surveys could be used in the following ways:

- to measure the level of knowledge and awareness of local programs;
- to determine the degree of consensus surrounding certain issues and predict how citizens might react to new initiatives;
- to assist in problem identification and needs assessment;
- to evaluate city programs, policies and service delivery; and
- to determine citizen priorities on spending.

Information from a survey is particularly helpful when it is used to complement other data sources and managerial or political judgements. However, there are limitations on the usefulness of surveys. The following outlines some of the major limitations that were noted in this submodule:

- Survey results are valid and useful only if care is used in the production phases.
- Survey results should be used in conjunction with other data sources.
- The usefulness of survey information depends partly upon the respondent's level of awareness and information--citizens should be questioned only about things with which they are familiar.
- The accuracy of opinions depends in part upon the nature of the issues.
- Survey results might be affected by intervening events.
- It is difficult, although not impossible, to predict behavior.

Three overall design considerations were noted which can affect the successful development of a survey:

- A professional survey researcher advises the city on all phases of the survey process.
- A good deal of work is spent in the early stages of the survey process deciding what information is needed from the survey and how that information might be used in planning and decisionmaking.
- The results are analyzed and reported in a timely and clear fashion which facilitates understanding and promotes utilization.

A professional survey researcher is important because many technical issues exist in survey research which affect the quality and utility of the results. A professional can assist the city in deciding what type of survey should be conducted, in designing the questionnaire, in drawing the sample, in conducting the interviews and in reporting the results. If a professional is not present, the local officials not only may inadvertently bias the results by incorrectly handling technical issues, but also may fail to take full advantage of the information collected.

In addition, local officials need to outline explicitly what information is needed and how that information might be used. Unless this is done carefully, the official may receive information that is incomplete and difficult to utilize.

And finally, the results need to be analyzed and reported in a manner which facilitates use. Often a good deal of time is spent collecting useful information, but too little is devoted to promoting dissemination and utilization.

This submodule also contained a discussion of the various steps involved in survey research. The purpose of this discussion was to familiarize the reader with the survey process in order that the reader could appreciate the amount of work involved in conducting surveys and could know how some of these issues might be handled. The following is an overview of some of the critical issues discussed in these sections:

- Purpose of Survey--The reader should understand that it is important to determine what information is needed and how it will be used, and to determine if this information is best obtained by conducting a survey.

- What type of survey--The reader should understand the relative advantages and disadvantages of mail, telephone and personal interviews.

- Designing the questionnaire--The reader should appreciate that there are many technical issues to be resolved in designing a questionnaire. In addition, the reader should understand that it is important that people who will use the results are involved in designing the questionnaire.

- Sampling--The reader should understand that major factors affecting the quality of a sample are the method of selecting people to interview and the number of people that are interviewed.

- Field work and data reduction--The reader should understand what is involved in this phase of the survey process.

- Reporting the results--The reader should understand that the people who are going to use the information from a survey should be involved in writing of reports.

FOOTNOTES

1. Harold D. Lasswell, A Preview of Policy Sciences (New York: American Elsevier, 1971).

2. Frank Snell, How to Hold A Better Meeting (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974).

3. Eric A. Nordlinger, Decentralizing the City: A Study of Boston's Little City Halls (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The M.I.T. Press, 1972).

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 282-309.

5. Frank Bernard, "The Ombudsman--Revisited," International Bar Journal (May, 1975) p. 50.

6. Donald C. Rowat (ed.), The Ombudsman: Citizen's Defender, 2nd edition (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1965, 1968) p. xxiv.